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L I G H T S

OF THE

OLD ENGLISH STAGE.

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CHAPTER I.

RICHARD BURBADGE AND OTHER ORIGINALS OF SHAKESPEARE'S CHARACTERS.

The Early English Drama and the First Theatres.—The Company of the Globe Play-House. Burbadge, Kempe, Heminge, Caudell, Sly, Taylor, and Alleyn.—Traditions of their Acting.

AN Elizabethan writer distinctly states that before 1570 “he neither knew nor read of any such theatres, set stages or playhouses as have been purposely built within man’s memory.” When the performances were not given in private houses, inn-yards still sufficed for accommodation, as they had a century and more previously. In 1572, so greatly had the number of actors increased that it was enacted that all who could not show licenses signed by two justices of the peace should be dealt with as rogues and vagabonds. The servants and mechanics, some from pride, some from idleness, some because they *felt* within them the stirrings of nobler talents, had deserted their legitimate callings and taken up wholly with their occasional ones; such was no doubt

the origin of the earlier theatrical companies. In 1586 Walsingham mentions two hundred players as being in or near London ; this perhaps is an exaggeration, and of course includes not only the regular companies but the irregular troupes who played in inn-yards without license.

In 1574 the first royal license, still extant, was granted to James Burbadge (the father of Richard) and other players of Lord Leicester's, giving them the right to play within the city of London and its liberties, or any cities, towns, or boroughs throughout England. This was strongly opposed by the mayor and aldermen, already tainted with Puritanism, and it would seem to a certain extent effectually, for it is doubtful whether the actor ever obtained a footing within the jurisdiction of those potentates. It has been surmised that the opposition of the city to plays being performed in the inn-yards within its bounds first brought about the construction of regular theatres. This opposition continued to vent itself in petitions and complaints to the sovereign ; the great concourse of people they brought prevented customers from getting to their shops, impeded marriages, burials, etc. In 1600 an order was issued in council to limit the theatres to two, the Fortune and the Globe ; but there seems to have been no attempt to carry it out, for in 1616 we find the mayor calling attention to this order, and directing the suppression of Blackfriars.

The rapidity with which the public profession of actor advanced in estimation and position is noticed in the following passage from the continuation of Stowe's Chronicle by Howes: "Comedians and stage players of former times were very poor and ignorant in respect of this time ; but being now (1583) growne very skilful and exquisite

actors for all matters, they were entertained into the service of divers great lords; out of which companies there were twelve of the best chosen, and, at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, they were sworne the queen's servants, and were allowed wages and liveries as grooms of the queen's chamber: and until this year 1583, the queen had no players."

The first regular playhouse of which we find any mention is "The Theatre," which was situated in Shoreditch. The earliest reference to it is in an old book, date 1576, quoted by Payne Collier in his "Annals of the Stage": "Those who go to Paris Garden, the Bell Savage,* or The Theatre, to behold bear baiting, interludes or fence play, must not account of any pleasant spectacle unless first they pay one penny at the gate, another at the entry of the scaffold, and a third for a quiet standing." This house, which could only have been a very rude wooden erection, seems to have been abandoned as early as 1578. The "Curtain," in Moor Fields, so called from its sign being a striped curtain, was opened in 1576, and was in use until the commencement of Charles I.'s reign. In Shakespeare's time there were seven regular theatres: the Curtain, the Blackfriars (built in 1578 by James Burbadge), the Whitefriars (1580), the Red Bull, St. John's Street, the Cockpit or Phœnix, Drury Lane, situated in Pitt Street, not opened until James's reign, the Fortune, Golden Lane, built or rebuilt by Alleyn (1599), and the Globe; there were besides, the Swan, the Rose, and the Hope, on Bankside (Southwark), and inn-yards in which dramatic performances continued to be given. For those seven theatres there were only six companies; the Blackfriars was a winter house, the Globe a summer, and one

* One of the inns most famous for dramatic performances.

company sufficed for the two. The Red Bull and the Fortune seem to have been houses something of the class of the Britannia and Grecian of the present day, being chiefly resorted to by citizens and the humbler classes. Blackfriars was “a private” theatre; that is to say, the performances were given by torchlight, although not at night; it was roofed in, and the pit had seats, which was not the case at the public ones, which were thatched only over the stage, the audience part being uncovered, and without seats for “the groundlings.” The aristocratic company had also boxes or rooms, of which they kept the keys, and the privilege of sitting upon the stage. When all the seats were occupied by the ladies, the gentlemen used to lie at their feet, as we are accustomed to see Hamlet lie at Ophelia’s. The Bankside theatres must have been of a very low class, the entertainment being probably a mixed one of singing, dancing, fencing, and buffoonery; the Swan and the Rose were shut up early in James I.’s reign. In regard to the size of these buildings, we read that the stage of the Fortune was forty-three feet wide, and, including a dressing-room at the back, thirty-nine and a half feet deep; it was three stories or tiers high, and from floor to ceiling was thirty-two feet; the cost of erecting it was five hundred and fifty pounds. Prices of admission seemed to have ranged from a penny to a shilling. But in the Induction to Ben Jonson’s “Bartholomew Fair,” produced at the Hope in 1614, the Scrivener, in reciting certain articles of agreement, says, “It shall be lawful for any man to judge his sixpen’-worth, his twelvepen’-worth, to his eighteenpence, two shillings, half-a-crown, to the value of his place.” From various allusions in old books, we gather that the play commenced at three, and that the time of opening was

announced by trumpets and flags. "Each playhouse advances his flag in the air, whither quickly at the waving thereof are summoned whole troops of men, women, and children." Besides the play, there was sometimes given what was called "a jig," that is, some satirical coarse verses which were recited by the clown, to the accompaniment of pipe and tabor, to which he also danced.

Whether any kind of scenery was used in our ancient theatres seems to me still a doubtful question; that it was employed in the entertainments given at Court, we have only to turn to the masques of Ben Jonson and Shirley to be assured of the fact. In a state-paper, under date 1563, we have a list of expenses for the production of a certain masque in that year. Among other entries are a castle, and an *arbor covered with painted canvas*; in 1574 we find in a similar authority an account of pins for hanging painted cloths for "the carriage of frames and paynted cloths for the players howses," and a charge for the device of making the sun break from behind a cloud. Bacon, in his essay on "Masks and Triumphs," says: "It is true the alteration of *scenes*, so it be quietly and without noise, are things of great beauty and pleasure." If no scenery of any kind was used in the regular playhouses, why did Shakespeare cumber his plays with a number of stage directions impossible to be carried out? In the folio edition of "King John," 1623, we have the direction, "Enter Arthur on the Walls." In "Henry VI.," "Enter Pucelle on the top of a tower." In Act II., Scene 2, of Jonson's "The Devil Is An Ass," upon the margin of the old copy was printed, "This scene is acted at two windows, as out of two contiguous buildings." Many other instances of such probable use of scenery may be found.

When a tragedy was represented, the stage was hung with black. Hence the opening line of "Henry VI.," "Hung be the heavens with black." It was also strewn with rushes. Malone says that toward the rear of the stage there appears to have been a balcony, the platform of which was about eight or ten feet from the ground, and probably supported by pillars. From hence, in many of our old plays, part of the dialogue was spoken; in front of this balcony curtains were hung.

Besides the adult actors, there were the children of St. Paul's (the choristers); those of the Chapel Royal, called the children of the Revels, were still more famous; they were formed into a regular company by Elizabeth; all Lilly's, and several of Jonson's and Shakespeare's plays, were originally performed by these boys, and their great popularity caused much jealousy among the professional actors. "Do they hold the same estimation (the players) they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?" asks Hamlet of Rosencrantz. "There is, sir," is the reply, "an aïery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of the question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages (so they call them), that many, wearing rapiers, are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come hither." These juveniles attained to great perfection, and several became, in after-life, admirable comedians at the Blackfriars.

Perhaps the most important player of the earlier drama was the clown. He was introduced into every play, and had unlimited license accorded him; he came on between the acts and scenes, and obtruded himself even upon the action of the play, without any respect to propriety, whenever any new piece of buffoonery

struck him. Hence Hamlet's advice to the players: "Let those who play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them, that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the meantime, *some necessary question of the play be then to be considered*: that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it."

There is no name among the old players more famous than that of Dick Tarleton. "For a wondrous, pleasant extemporal wit, he was the wonder of his tyme! He was so beloved that men use his picture for their signs," says Howes. Another old author tells us: "For the clown's part he never had his equal." Even Ben Jonson, who never misses an opportunity of a fling at actors, could not refrain from applauding Tarleton. "The self-same words spoken by another would hardly move a man to smile, which uttered by him would force a sad soul to laughter." He is said to have been brought to London from Shropshire by one of Lord Leicester's servants, who found him in the fields tending his father's swine, and was so astonished by the readiness of his answers and the quickness of his intellect, that he proposed he should enter my lord's service—a proposal Dick was willing enough to accept. In a little while he was enrolled among the twelve players who formed the Queen's company, and became a sort of court-jester. "When the queen was serious," says Fuller, "I dare not say sullen, Tarleton could undumpish her at his pleasure. He told her more of her faults than most of her chaplains, and cured her of her melancholy better than all her physicians." He fell into disgrace at last, however, and was dismissed from Court for scurrilous reflections upon

Leicester and Raleigh. He appears to have chiefly played at the Red Bull; in his later years he kept a tavern in Paternoster Row, and afterward the Tabor in Grace-church Street. He died in 1588, and was buried in St. Leonard's Shoreditch. "He wrote," says Dibdin ("History of the Stage"), "one dramatic piece called 'The Seven Deadly Sins;' and this appears to have been when, tired of his debaucheries, he, like Green and Nash, pretended to repent of his irregularities, at which time his wit seems to have dwindled into mere scurrility, for as he grew debilitated with his excesses, he became sour and sarcastic. None escaped his virulence, not even Leicester and Raleigh, till, being discarded from Court, and growing every day more contemptible in the world's opinion, he died like Voltaire, a mixture of imbecility, folly, and irresolution." On the frontispiece of a jest-book, which bears his name, there is a picture of him which answers Chettle's description. "The next, by his suit of russet, his buttoned cap, his taber, his standing on his toe, and other tricks, I know either to be the body or the resemblance of Richard Tarleton, who living, for his pleasant conceits, was of all men liked, and dying, for mirth left not his like." There are many strange stories recorded of his wit and his **rogueries**, but most of them have been applied to other celebrated jesters. Here is one that much savors of **a tale** told by Rabelais. Having run up a long score at an **inn** at Sandwich, and not being able or not feeling disposed to pay, he made his boy accuse him of being a seminary priest. When the officers came they found him upon his knees crossing himself most diligently; they paid his reckoning, made him prisoner, and carried him off to London. He was taken before Recorder Fleet-

wood, who knew him well, and, laughing heartily at the trick, not only discharged but invited him home to dinner. Another anecdote illustrates what I have before said of the license allowed to the clowns. In a performance of "Henry V.," not Shakespeare's, but an older play of that name, Tarleton had to double the Chief Justice with clown, and the actor who personated Prince Hal gave him a ringing slap upon the face. Soon after the exit of the Justice, Tarleton reentered in his proper character. "Hadst thou been here then," said one of the actors, "thou wouldest have seen Prince Henry hit the Judge a terrible box on the ear." "What, strike a judge?" exclaimed the clown; "then it must be very terrible to the judge, since the very report so terrifies me that my cheek burns again with it."

Come we now to the original actors of Shakespeare's plays. Here is the list as it stands in the first folio.

"The names of the principal actors in all these plays."

" William Shakspeare,	Samuel Gilburne,
Richard Burbadge,	Robert Arimn,
John Hemings,	William Ostler,
Augustine Philips,	Nathan Field,
William Kempt,	John Underwood,
Thomas Pooke,	Nicholas Tooley,
George Bryan,	William Ecclestone,
Henry Condell,	Joseph Taylor,
William Slye,	Robert Benfield,
Richard Cowley,	Robert Gouge,
John Lowine,	Richard Robinson,
Samuel Crosse,	john Shancke,
Alexander Cooke,	john Rice."

Of the first, and mightiest, name in the list, it comes not within the scope of this article to write, since it would be useless to enter into a discussion upon Shakespeare's merits as an actor; his contemporaries are silent upon the subject, and we are therefore without any means of judging. That he thoroughly understood the art is proved by his address to the players of *Hamlet*; but that is no proof of his own excellence, since there are many men who, although they are admirable judges of acting and excellent stage managers, are very inferior performers. We know that he played the Ghost in his own "*Hamlet*," that he was the original Know'ell in "*Every Man In His Humor*," and that he was in the first cast of "*Sejanus*"—and that is all.

The Burbidges are believed to have sprung from a good Warwickshire family. James Burbadge has already been noticed in these pages as an actor and the builder of the Blackfriars Theatre. The date of Richard's birth is unknown; Payne Collier surmises that he was Shakespeare's junior. He probably went upon the stage when quite a boy as a performer of female characters; and we find him holding a prominent position in his profession previous to 1588. An agreement is still extant between Richard Burbadge and a certain carpenter for the construction of the Globe Theatre. Of the lives of these old actors nothing is known; there were no anecdote-mongers in those days to pry into the domesticities of celebrated men, and to make notes of every green-room scandal or tattle, or to write their reminiscences, and take posthumous vengeance upon friends and enemies alike. Pleasant it would be for us if there had been, for then we should have known Shakespeare the man as well as Shakespeare the dramatist. But literature and art were

such recent creations that people had not yet learned to comprehend their value, and, feeling little interest themselves in the private affairs of their professors, thought posterity would feel less, or none at all. Probably the lives of these players were uneventful enough; most of them appear to have been highly respectable citizens, whose days were absorbed in the study and exercise of their art; their nights, in the company of gay gallants who eagerly sought their society, were perhaps a little wild; but it was an age of life and vigor, when men's veins were filled with hot blood, and not the red stagnant fluid that now does service for it. Burbadge was the first of that noble line of great tragic actors which ended with Macready—forever, it would seem—and must have been, according to contemporary testimony, a most consummate master, second to none. All that is known of his biography may be contained in a few words. He was born, and lived and died, in Holywell Street, Shoreditch, or Halliwell Street, as it was then called. According to one of his epitaphs, "On the death of that great master in his art and quality, painting and playing," he was doubly an artist; and Payne Collier conjectures that Martin Droeshout's engraving of Shakespeare, in the first folio, was taken from a likeness painted by Burbadge. There is no evidence to support such a supposition, but it is not an unlikely one. "For honor, who of more repute than Dick Burbadge and Will Kempe—he is not accounted a gentleman who does not know Dick Burbadge and Will Kempe." ("Return from Parnassus," 1606.) He was universally acknowledged to stand at the head of his profession, and to be above rivalry. Wagers were frequently made in those days upon the merits of favorite actors, who were pitted one

against the other; even the great Alleyn was at times involved in such trials of skill, but never Burbadge; with him it was not believed possible to contest. He died in 1618, some say of the plague; but this line, in an epitaph from which I shall presently quote,

“He (Death) first made seizure of thy wondrous tongue,”

seems to indicate paralysis. In the register of St. Leonard’s Shoreditch we read: “1618. Richard Burbadge, player, was buried the xvijth of March, Halliwell Street.”

He was the original of the greater number of Shakespeare’s heroes—of Coriolanus, Brutus, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Shylock, Macbeth, Henry V., Prince Hal, and Richard the Third. Bishop Corbet, in his “Iter Boreale,” talking how his host at Leicester described the battle of Bosworth Field, says:

“Besides what of his knowledge he could say,
He had authenticke notice from the play;
Which I might guess, by’s mustering up the ghosts,
And policyes, not incident to hostes;
But chiefly by that one perspicuous thing,
Where he mistooke a player for a king,
For when he would have sayed, ‘King Richard dyed,’
And call’d—‘a horse, a horse!—he, ‘Burbidge, cryed.’”

Here are extracts from a famous elegy which enumerates some of his greatest parts, and gives us an excellent idea of his acting:

“He’s gone, and with him what a world are dead,
Friends every one, and what a blank instead!
Take him for all in all, he was a man
Not to be match’d, and no age ever can.
No more young Hamlet, though but scant of breath,
Shall cry ‘Revenge,’ for his dear father’s death;

Poor Romeo never more shall tears beget
For Juliet's love and cruel Capulet:
Harry shall not be seen as king or prince,
They died with thee, dear Dick,

And Crookback, as befits, shall cease to live.
Tyrant Macbeth, with unwash'd bloody hand,
We vainly now may hope to understand.
Brutus and Marcius henceforth must be dumb,
For ne'er thy like upon the stage shall come,
To charm the faculty of ears and eyes,
Unless we could command the dead to rise.

Heart-broke Philaster, and Aminatas too,
Are lost for ever; with the red-hair'd Jew.

Thy stature small, but every thought and mood
Might throughly from thy face be understood.
And his whole action he could change with ease,
From ancient Leare to youthful Pericles.
But let me not forget one chiefest part,
Wherein beyond the rest he moved the heart,
The grieved Moor—

All these and many more with him are dead.

England's great Roscius! for what Roscius
Was to Rome that Burbadge was to us!
How did his speech become him, and his pace
Suit with his speech, and every action grace,
Them both alike, while not a word did fall
Without just weight to ballast it withal.
Hadst thou but spoke with Death, and us'd the power
Of thy enchanting tongue at that first hour
Of his assault, he had let fall his dart
And quite been charm'd with thy all-charming art."

“ He was a delightful Proteus,” says Flecknoe, “ so wholly transforming himself into his part, and putting off himself with his clothes, as he never (not so much as in the tyring-house) assumed himself again until the play was done. . . . He had all the parts of an excellent actor (animating his words with speaking and speech with action), his auditors being never more delighted than when he spoke, nor more sorry than when he held his peace ; yet even then he was an excellent actor still, never failing in his part when he had done speaking ; but with his looks and gesture, maintaining it still unto the height.” The queen of James I. died about the same time, but royalty was forgotten in grief for the stage favorite, as it was pointed out by a satiric poet of the time.

“ Burbadge, the player, has vouchsafed to die !
Therefore in London is not one eye dry.

•
Dick Burbadge was their mortal god on earth :
When he expires, lo ! all lament the man,
But where’s the grief should follow good Queen Anne ? ”

Tarleton’s immediate successor and almost equal in wit was Will Kempe ; but he was a legitimate actor as well as a clown, being, it is supposed, the original Dogberry, Peter, Launce, Shallow, Launcelot Gobbo, Touchstone, and First Gravedigger. In an old pamphlet he is spoken of as “ that most comical and conceited cavaleire M. de Kempe, jestmonger and vicegerent general to the ghost of Dick Tarleton.” Heywood, in his “ Apology for Actors,” says: “ To whom (Tarleton) succeeded Will Kempe, as well in the favor of her Majesty as in the opinion and good thoughts of the general audience.” Nash speaks of him in 1589 as a complete and finished

actor, whose fame had extended even beyond the shores of England. But it is thought that Hamlet's diatribe against gagging was especially meant for Kempe. Like Tarleton, he did not confine his wit and vagaries to the stage, but frequently practised them out-of-doors. There is, in an old pamphlet, dated 1600, written by him, entitled "Nine Daies Wonder. Performed in a morris daunce from London to Norwich, containing the pleasures, paines and kinde entertainments of William Kempe between London and that City," etc. On the title-page there is a woodcut representing Kempe dancing with bells on his legs, wearing a brocaded jacket and scarf, attended by Thomas Sly, another noted actor, as taborer. It need scarcely be remarked that this strange expedition was undertaken for a wager. A yet more extraordinary feat performed under the same condition was walking backward to Berwick. Another time he journeyed to France and Rome, dancing all the way, it would seem, from the following verse :

" He did labour after the tabor,
For to dance ; then into France
He took paines
To skip it.
In hopes of gain
He will trip it
On the toe."

He is made to say in an old comedy,* "I am somewhat hard of study, an like your honour, but if you will invent any extemporal merriment I'll put out the small

* It was a custom in the old plays to introduce the actors by name into the inductions, and even into the body of the drama, and make them talk about themselves.

sacke of wit I ha' left in venture with them." He was held in high estimation by his contemporaries, and his name was frequently coupled even with that of Burbadge. The time of his death is uncertain; according to the "Biographia Dramatica," it occurred in 1603, of the plague.

John Heminge was another Warwickshire man—how many of the old players came from that part of the country!—Heminge was born at Shottery, not far from Stratford, about 1556. Before Elizabeth's death he was one of the principal proprietors of the Globe, and his name is joined with that of Shakespeare and Burbadge in King James's license of 1603. He is accredited with the honor of being the original Falstaff, and had even the greater honor of being, with Condell, the editor and publisher of the first edition of Shakespeare's plays (1623). According to the following passage, it would appear that he received at least a portion of the manuscript from the author direct: "His mind and hand went together, and what he thought he uttered with that easiness that *we have scarcely received from him a blot in his papers.*" The italics are my own. Payne Collier thinks that many of the old actors were engaged in business as well as professionally, and remarks that as Heminge was free of the Grocer's Company he might have been a grocer. But in his will he is styled John Heminge, gentleman, which term could scarcely in those days, when the word meant something, and was not applied indiscriminately to a coal-heaver and a prince, have been used to describe a tradesman. He died in 1630, and was buried in St. Mary's, Aldermanbury, in which parish he had resided all his life.

Condell, his collaborateur in the edition of Shake-

speare, was also a resident of Aldermanbury, and the owner of property in that parish; a man of substance; who had shares in the Blackfriars Theatre, and kept his country house at Fulham. No particular Shakespearean part has been assigned to him, but he was the original Bobadil, as well as of several of Beaumont and Fletcher's and Webster's great characters. He died in 1627.

William Sly, who has been previously mentioned in conjunction with Kempe, was the original Osric. Cowley was the original Verges; Arimn succeeded Kempe in the character of Dogberry; Lowin succeeded Heminge as Falstaff, and was the original Volpone, Mammon, Bosola, Amintor; he had a share and a half in the Blackfriars, and married a wealthy wife, but, unlike the others mentioned, he lived on into the troubrous times of the rebellion, and lost all in the suppression of the theatres. Nathan Field was said to be second only to Burbadge as an actor. He was one of the children of "Her Majesty's Revels," and is mentioned in the original cast of Jonson's "Cynthia's Revels." Being born in 1587, he was too young to have been, at least as an adult, an original in any of Shakespeare's plays, but he succeeded Burbadge in several of his great characters, and was especially famous in the Moor.

"Field is in sooth an actor—all men know it,
And is the true Othello of the poet,"

says an old rhymster.

Joseph Taylor has been accredited by Davies with being the original Hamlet; but, even if there was no direct evidence against this assertion, it would be absurd to suppose that Burbadge, in the height of his powers, would allow another actor to possess himself of such a

character. Taylor was his successor in the part, and might, even during the latter years of "Roscius," have played it when the other was indisposed. He is supposed to have been the original Iago, but after Burbadge's death he took Othello.

The little that is known of the remaining actors enumerated in the folio would scarcely prove interesting reading. They were nearly all men of good position, who left behind at their deaths a very respectable amount of money and landed property. I cannot, however, omit a passing mention of another celebrated player of this period, who, although not concerned in the representation of Shakespeare's dramas, has been coupled with Burbadge by Sir Richard Baker as one of two actors "such as no age must ever look to see the like." Among other parts he was the original of Marlowe's "Jew of Malta," and "Tamerlane." In conjunction with Philip Henslowe, he built the "Fortune" in 1599, and, having accumulated considerable wealth, founded, as is well known, Dulwich College for six poor men and women, and twelve children. At first it was intended that the recipients of this bounty should be drawn exclusively from the theatrical profession, but it is said that the refusal of the pensioners to admit among them an old door-keeper of the theatre so disgusted the founder that he at once changed the conditions of the bequest. Since 1857 this charity has been entirely reconstituted. The revenue left by Alleyn was £600 a year; it is now £17,000. His excellences as an actor have been set forth by Jonson, who, comparing him with Roscius and *Aesopus* of Rome, says:

" Who both their graces in thyself hast more
Outstript, than they did all who went before ;

And present worth in all dost so contract,
As others speak but only thou dost act.
Wear this renown. 'Tis just that who did give
So many poets life, by one should live."

Heywood, in one of the prologues of the "Jew of Malta," speaks of him as—

"Proteus for shapes, and Roscius for a tongue."

One might be almost inclined to say that this was the golden age of acting as well as of the drama. There seems never to have been such a passion for dramatic entertainments as then; the art was thoroughly studied and understood, as how could it be otherwise under the reign of such dramatists as Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shakespeare? * The actors lived in their fine old substantial city houses, or in grand country manors, such as Edward Alleyn inhabited at Dulwich, esteemed and sought after by the best people, and, if commonly prudent, dying rich and honored. Their worst enemy was the plague; while it raged, and that was pretty frequently, all theatres were closed, and they had to migrate into the country, which was not profitable.

* Boys were regularly apprenticed to the profession in those days. Each principal was entitled to have a boy or apprentice, who played the young and the female characters, and for whose services he received a certain sum. We find in Henslowe's account an item for buying the services of one for eight pounds. Thus trained under great masters, it is not to be wondered at that they grew up to be such consummate masters of their art.

CHAPTER II.

THE CIBBERS.

Colley Cibber, Wit, Actor, Playwright, and Poet-Laureate.—A Patriarch of the Stage, linking together two Great Eras.—His Career as Player and Author.—Theophilus Cibber's Name perpetuated in his Wife, one of the Great Tragedy Queens of the Time.—Colley Cibber's Daughter.

IT was malice alone, unmitigated by any show of truth or justice, that made Pope fix upon Colley Cibber as the second hero of "The Dunciad." Theobald might have deserved such a distinction, but there was no man of that day to whom the term "dullard" could be less appropriately applied than to the witty creator of Lord Foppington and Lady Betty Modish, to the author of "The Apology," of "The Careless Husband," the *collaborateur* of Vanbrugh in "The Provoked Husband," and one of the finest comedians of the age. Cibber is another instance of the remarkable longevity of actors; and as an extraordinary link, uniting far-sundered generations by a single life, he is second only to Macklin. He played with the great actors of the Restoration in their palmiest days, and lived to see Garrick in the zenith of his fame.

He was born in 1671, in Southampton Street, Strand. His father, who was a sculptor and a native of Holstein, had come over to England previous to the Restoration: his handiwork may still be seen in the bassi-relievi on the base of the Monument, and in the figures of Raving and Melancholy Madness over the gates of Bedlam. His mother, whose maiden name was Colley, was of a good old Rutlandshire family. Neither in his youth nor his manhood was he a favorite with his associates; he had

a mocking, jeering humor, which he confesses made him many enemies through life. He tried for a scholarship at Winchester, but failed. Already, however, he had conceived a predilection for the stage, and rather rejoiced in his failure.

In 1690 he was admitted within the magic circle. He was known in the theatre by the name of Master Colley; after waiting for some time he obtained the honor of carrying on a message, in some play, to Betterton; but Master Colley was so terrified or so nervous that the entire scene was disconcerted by him. Betterton angrily demanded who the young fellow was. Downes, the prompter, replied, "Master Colley." "Then forfeit Master Colley," replied the tragedian. "Why, sir, he has no salary," said Downes. "No? Then put him down ten shillings a week and forfeit him five." And to this Cibber was indebted for the first money he ever received from his profession.

There was at this time, and since 1682, only one theatre open in London; the Duke's company, which had formerly played at Dorset Gardens, had amalgamated with the King's company at Drury Lane, and the entire strength of the two corps, being united, formed, Cibber says, the most splendid combination of dramatic talent ever witnessed in this or any other country. Betterton, Montfort, Kynaston, Mrs. Betterton, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Montfort, Mrs. Bracegirdle were only the emperors and empresses where all were kings and queens. Very small was the chance of tyros in such a company. The first part in which young Cibber made any success was the small character of the chaplain in Otway's "Orphan." "If he does not make a good actor I'll be ——!" cried Goodman, then retired from

the profession. “The surprise of being commended by one who had been himself so eminent upon the stage, and in so positive a manner, was more than I could support ; in a word, it almost took away my breath, and (laugh if you please) fairly drew tears from my eyes. I will still make it a question whether Alexander himself, or Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, when at the head of their first victorious armies, could feel a greater transport in their bosoms than I did then in mine, when but in this rear of the troop of comedians.”

As it has been before stated, there was but one theatre open in London. Monopolies, however, usually come to grief, and this was no exception ; unparalleled as was the talent of the company, small as were the expenses—Betterton never received more than five pounds a week for himself and wife—the finances, whether from bad management or lack of public support, fell into disorder, salaries were lowered, and not paid even at the reduced ratio. To make amends, free benefits were given to the actors, which was the commencement of a theatrical institution that is only now on the wane. These gave noble and rich admirers the opportunity to present sums of money to their favorites, and Betterton is said to have realized over six hundred pounds by one such benefit. Nevertheless there were murmurings and dissatisfaction at this uncomfortable state of affairs, and the patentees adopted the high-handed course of taking away parts from some of the principals and giving them to inferior artists. Thereupon Betterton and Mrs. Brace-girdle seceded, and, appealing to the king, obtained a license to act stage-plays in the theatre in Portugal Street, Lincoln’s Inn. This house had been originally a tennis court, and was converted into a theatre by Sir

William Davenant; but upon the amalgamation of the two companies it had reverted to its original use. Betterton refitted and opened it with Congreve's "All for Love," and took in his train many of the best actors. Here was a chance for aspirants to come to the fore; and many did, but not, according to Cibber, very advantageously.

There was deadly feud between the two theatres, and each strained every nerve to steal a march upon the other. An announcement being issued that "Hamlet" would be performed at Drury Lane, on the same morning bills appeared, to the effect that the same tragedy would be performed that evening at Lincoln's Inn. The Drury-Lane-ites were struck with consternation. To bring their "Hamlet" into competition with Betterton's was not to be thought of; the piece must be changed. The one substituted was Congreve's "Old Bachelor." This choice was made by Powel, who thought to revenge himself by mimicking Betterton in the principal character. New bills were immediately issued, books of the comedy were sent for, but not two of the company had ever played in the piece, and there were only six hours before the rising of the curtain. In looking through the cast, however, a new difficulty presented itself. Fondlewife, Dogget's great part, had been forgotten. In desperation somebody suggested that Cibber had been heard at different times to express a great desire to play that character. There were head-shakings; but Powel, bent upon his small revenge, adopted the suggestion, with the very ungracious remark, "If the fool has a mind to blow himself up at once, let us e'en give him a clear stage for it." So it was agreed. Colley had so often witnessed Dogget's performance that

he was nearly perfect in the words, and even rehearsed from memory while all the others were obliged to read. Powel had resolved to imitate Betterton, Cibber resolved to reproduce Dogget. "At my first appearance," he says, "one might have imagined by the various murmurs of the audience that they were in doubt whether Dogget himself were not returned, or that they could not conceive what strange face it could be that so nearly resembled him, for I had laid the tint of forty years more than my real age upon my features, and to the minute placing of a hair was dressed exactly like him. When I spoke the surprise was still greater, as if I had not only borrowed his clothes, but his voice too." His success was immense. "A much better actor might have been proud of the applause that followed me; after one loud plaudit was ended, and sunk into a general whisper, that seemed still to continue their private approbation, it revived to a second, and again to a third still louder than the former." Dogget himself was in the pit contemplating his double! But not even this triumph could procure his advancement, and he was again dropped back into his former position; indeed it was turned against him, for it was presumed that in no other line could he be successful, and his application for parts was always met with: "It is not in your way." His answer indicates the true artist: "I think anything, naturally written, ought to be in everybody's way that pretends to be an actor." "This," he says, "was looked upon as vain, impracticable conceit of my own." Poor Colley did indeed find Parnassus a hard hill to climb.

These rebuffs, as he says, were "enough, perhaps, to make a young fellow of more modesty despair; but being of a temper not easily disheartened, I resolved to

leave nothing unattempted that might show me in some new rank of distinction. Having then no other resource, I was at last reduced to write a character for myself." The play, upon which he was engaged a year, was "Love's Last Shift;" the part, Sir Novelty Fashion, was a satire upon the fopperies of the day. He induced Southerne to hear him read it, and the veteran dramatist was so well satisfied that he recommended it to the patentees. Yet still there was a strange distrust, considering what he had done, of Cibber's powers; and while he was standing at the wing before the play commenced on the first night, Southerne took him by the hand and said: "Young man! I pronounce thy play a good one; I will answer for its success, if thou dost not spoil it by thy own action." But his fears were misplaced, and the success of both author and actor was so great that people were in doubt to which they should give the preference. The Lord Chamberlain pronounced it to be the best first play that any author in his memory had produced; and that for a young fellow to show himself such an actor and such a writer in one day was something extraordinary.

Yet, even this double success failed to permanently improve his position; another year elapsed, and no fresh part of any importance was intrusted to him, although he had proved his versatility by his admirable rendering of such widely dissimilar characters as the uxorious old Fondlewife and the exquisite fop, Sir Novelty Fashion. But it is said that all things come to the man who waits; and twelve months after the production of his comedy, Vanbrugh wrote a sequel to it—"The Relapse"—in which Sir Novelty, now ennobled as Lord Foppington, was assigned to Cibber. This continued throughout his

life to be one of his most famous parts. "The Relapse" was Vanbrugh's first work, and a few months afterward he brought out "Æsop," in which Cibber sustained the title *role* as successfully as he had Lord Foppington. He had by this time arrived at the munificent salary of thirty shillings per week, which Christopher Rich, who had now, by buying up all the shares, become sole manager of the theatre, did not always pay him. "While the actors were in this condition," he says, "I think I may very well be excused in my presuming to write plays, which I was forced to do for the support of my increasing family, my precarious income as an actor being then too scant to supply it with even the necessities of life. It may be observable, too, that my nurse and my muse were equally prolific; that the one was seldom the mother of a child but in the same year the other made me the father of a play."

His second comedy—"Woman's Wit" (1697)—was a dead failure; "Xerxes," a tragedy (1699), shared the same fate. In 1700 he produced his famous alteration of Shakespeare's "Richard the III."—the Richard of Garrick, Cooke, Kean—which kept the stage, to the exclusion of the original play, until Mr. Irving's recent revival. Although very inferior to the tragedy upon which it was founded, it is a remarkably clever piece of stage-craft, the cleverest of all the Shakespearean alterations, and has outlived them all. "Love Makes a Man" followed in the next year; "She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not," a capital comedy of intrigue of the Spanish school, full of bustle and situation, was produced in 1703. In 1704 he brought out his finest work—"The Careless Husband"—into which he again brought his old favorite, Lord Foppington. This was a great advance upon

“Love’s Last Shift,” which, quoting Congreve, he confesses had in it many things “that were like wit, that in reality were not wit, and has a great deal of puerility and frothy stage-language in it.” “The Careless Husband” would not be acceptable to a modern audience, in spite of its witty and frequently brilliant dialogue; it is all talk, with scarcely any situation; the serious scenes—as is the case in all his plays—are strained and pedantic; Sir Charles, Lady Easy, and Morelove, all tedious; the famous fop and libertine, Lord Foppington, admirably as he pictured the fine gentleman of the day, is now obsolete, for coxcombry changes its form with every change of fashion and manners, and the exquisite of to-day is quite a different animal even to that of our youth. The gem of the play, however, and one of the finest comic conceptions of the last century, is Lady Betty Modish, the vain, frivolous, tormenting coquette, yet, at the bottom, good-hearted woman of fashion. Such a character, stripped of the coloring and conventionalities of the age, is as true to Nature now as it was then. It is also remarkable as having brought into fame the celebrated Mrs. Oldfield.

Cibber had commenced the comedy some months before its production, and put it aside, as among the actresses of the theatre he could not find one who realized his conception of its principal character, until his astuteness discovered the very woman he wanted in a young actress, who had hitherto been thought but little of.

Only a few years previously the Drury Lane company could scarcely hold their own against their rivals; but the tables were beginning to turn. Betterton’s company was entirely made up of veterans, whose powers

were fast decaying; "and though," says Cibber, "we were too young to be excellent, we were not too old to be better." "But," he adds, "what will not society depreciate? For though I must own and avow in our highest prosperity I always thought we were greatly their inferiors, yet, by our good-fortune of being seen in quite new lights, which several new-written plays had shown us in, we now began to make a considerable stand against them." Cibber is too modest. In 1705 Betterton and his actors went to the new theatre, built by Sir John Vanbrugh, in the Haymarket. Several of the Drury Lane people deserted to the new house. But it was a failure. Vanbrugh resigned the management, which fell into the hands of one Swiney; to whom, weary at length of being fleeced by their roguish manager, Christopher Rich, Dogget, Mrs. Oldfield, and Cibber went over.

Then followed many changes in the theatrical state, which it will be more convenient to describe in a future paper, and which ended in the rival companies, minus some of the veterans—particularly Betterton, who died two years before—uniting in 1711 under a license granted in the joint names of Collier, Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget. Yes, behold Master Colley, after more than twenty years of struggles, snubs, and waiting, one of the kings of the stage. Collier soon retired, and the management became a triumvirate, which so ably acquitted itself of its duties that it opened a period of uninterrupted theatrical prosperity, extending over twenty years.

Cibber was a rake, a man of fashion, a member of White's, and was always to be seen in the company of lords. But if he was a toady, he was not an obsequious one. He had a prejudice against Elrington—afterward a very fine actor—when a young man, and would not

advance him. A nobleman undertook to plead his cause and solicit for him a certain part he had a great desire to play. "My lord," answered Cibber, "it is not with us as with you; your lordship is sensible that there is no difficulty in filling places at court; you cannot be at a loss for persons to act their part there. But I assure you it is quite otherwise in our theatrical world. If we should invest people with characters who are incapable to support them we should be undone." Cibber had a great passion for the gaming-table, and frequently lost heavily; and this, and his gay style of living, interfered with his professional duties, and at times he would go on the stage imperfect in some of his oldest parts. Davies had seen him lose himself in Sir Courtly Nice, supply the deficiencies of memory by an elaborate bow, a long, drawled-out "Your servant, madam." Then deliberately inhaling a pinch of snuff, he would strut across the stage and whisper to the prompter, "What is next?"

In "The Laureat," published during a quarrel between him and Wilks, he is accused of envy, idleness, neglect, and tyrannical behavior to inferiors. "Did you not," says the writer, "hurt the theatrical affairs by your avarice and ill-conduct? Did you not by your general misbehavior toward authors and actors bring an odium on your brother managers as well as yourself? I have been assured no person who ever had any power on the stage was ever so universally odious to the actors as yourself." He was particularly merciless to young authors. He called it "the choking of singing birds." There is a story told of one bringing a play for Cibber to read. He knocked at the manager's door, and scarcely venturing to step beyond the threshold, placed a roll of manuscript in his hand, asking him to read it and give

his opinion. Colley turned over the first leaf, read two lines, and gave it back to him with an "It won't do, sir;" and then went away to a coffee-house to tell the anecdote and laugh over the unfortunate man's discomfiture.

Upon all sides we hear of his envious disposition. Gildon says: "He is always repining at the success of others, and upon the stage is always making his fellow-actors uneasy." Such a disposition, in that pugnacious age, it might be supposed, would get him into serious scrapes, but with Colley discretion was the better part of valor. "Of all the comedians who have appeared upon the stage in my memory," writes Chesterfield in "Common Sense," "no one has taken a kicking with such humor as our excellent Laureate."

It was in 1730 that the office of Poet-Laureate was bestowed upon him—why, must ever remain an impenetrable mystery. "As an actor," says a contemporary, "he had undoubted merits; as a dramatic writer his character was both good and bad; as Laureate, he was unquestionably the worst that ever was."

He still went on diligently producing plays, good, bad, and indifferent; of some, only the names survive: "The Double Gallant" and "The Lady's Last Stake" (1707-'8) were the best that appeared before the celebrated "Nonjuror" (1718), upon which Bickerstaff afterward founded "The Hypocrite." It was a clever adaptation of Molière's "Tartuffe," applied as a satire to the Jacobite faction. It put the Whigs into ecstasies; the king sent the author two hundred pounds, and Lintot, the bookseller, gave him one hundred for the copyright. If it made him friends among the Whigs, it created him enemies among the Tories, and confirmed that

virulence which Pope manifested against him during so many years. But the hatred of the great satirist began with a more personal cause. A few months before the appearance of "The Nonjuror," he had conjointly with Gay written a farce entitled "Three Hours after Marriage." The piece was damned in consequence of an extravagant situation in the last act, in which the lovers insert themselves, one into a mummy's, the other into a crocodile's, skin. A short time afterward Cibber, while playing Bayes in "The Rehearsal," made a satirical allusion to these incidents, probably because he saw Pope in front. Trembling with passion the poet came behind the scenes and with a torrent of abuse demanded that the allusion should not be repeated. So far from yielding, Cibber vowed he would repeat the jest every time he played the part. This was the beginning of the famous quarrel, which culminated in the actor being made the hero of "The Dunciad." Pope did not come best out of the affray; the moderation and dignity of Cibber's first "Letter to Mr. Pope" are admirable. He made no attempts to depreciate the genius of his foe; on the contrary, he sincerely praised it. His second, in which he promulgated a ludicrous and indecent story against him, although less commendable, yet fought him with his own foul weapons, and made him writhe with agony. "Cibber did not obtrude himself upon the contest," says D'Israeli ("Quarrels of Authors"). "Had he been merely a poor vain creature, he had not preserved so long a silence. . . . He triumphed by that singular felicity of character, that inimitable *gaieté de cœur*, that honest simplicity of truth, from which flowed so warm an admiration of the genius of his adversary, and that exquisite tact in the characters of men which carried

down this child of airy humor to the verge of his ninetieth year, with all the enjoyment of strong animal spirits, and all that innocent egotism which became frequently a source of his own raillery."

In 1728 he completed and produced Vanbrugh's posthumous and unfinished comedy of "The Provoked Husband." A hostile audience assembled on the first night to hiss Cibber's portion of the work, and applaud Sir John's: they never doubted their ability to detect which was which. But what was intended to be a bitter mortification to the Laureate proved an immense triumph. He printed Vanbrugh's fragment, and showed his enemies that the scenes they had loudly applauded were his, notably the fine one in the last act, the reconciliation between Lord and Lady Townley, while those of the Wronghead family, which they had so violently condemned, were the work of his *collaborateur*. "The Provoked Husband" is an admirable work, which kept the stage until within the last thirty years, and some of its best portions are Cibber's.

To the end he continued to be the old beau, the man about town, airy, gay, sarcastic as ever. The actors of his youth continued to be his ideals of histrionic excellence; next to those in his esteem were the performers of his maturity; but he could see no talent in the rising men and women of his old age. It was with difficulty that he could be brought to acknowledge that Garrick was "clever."

He died in 1757 at his house in Berkeley Square, at the age of eighty-six, and was buried in the Abbey.

Cibber's powers as an actor lay entirely in comic characters. In these he was surpassingly fine. "When he represented a ridiculous humor," says a writer in the

Gentleman's Magazine, "he had a mouth in every nerve, and became eloquent without speaking; his attitudes were pointed and exquisite; his expression was stronger than painting; he was beautifully absorbed by the character, and demanded and monopolized attention; his very extravagances were colored by propriety." Dibdin, in his "History of the Stage," says: "To him obstacles were incentives. Nature even, according to his own account, had denied him almost every theatrical requisite, yet he found a substitute for all, and made study, perfectness, and judgment arrest as much the attention of the public as others did truth, elegance, and nature."

One of his most famous performances was Justice Shallow, of which Davies says: "His manner was so perfectly simple, his look so vacant when he questioned his cousin Silence about the price of ewes, and lamented in the same breath, with silly surprise, the death of Old Double, that it will be impossible for any surviving spectator not to smile at the remembrance of it. The want of ideas occasions Shallow to repeat almost everything he says. Cibber's transition from asking the price of bullocks to trite but grave reflections on mortality was so natural and attended with such an unmeaning roll of his small pig's-eyes, accompanied with such an important utterance of 'tick, tick, tick,' not much louder than the balance of a watch or a pendulum, that I question if any actor was ever superior in the conception and expressing of solemn misgiving."

His principal plays have been already referred to in these pages, but one merit has yet to be mentioned: they were among the first that, profiting by the censures of Jeremy Collier, returned to the path of decorousness and

decency, and commenced the reaction against the licentious comedies of the Restoration. His "Apology," written soon after his retirement, is the finest theatrical book in the language; it is a complete history of the English stage for forty years, and its pictures of the great actors of that by-gone age are so vivid that we can almost see them before us in their great impersonations. It is also full of shrewd and clever remarks upon the dramatic art, applicable to any period, and might be as truly a text-book to the actor of the present day as it was to those of his own.

Theophilus Cibber is a name almost as familiar to us as Colley. At eighteen he made the stage his profession, and, thanks to his father's position, was quickly thrust into public notice. As a man he was in every respect contemptible and vile, a spendthrift, a cheat, and a miserable panderer. Upon the death of his first wife, in 1773, he began to pay court to the charming Susanna Maria Arne, then little over twenty, the sister of the celebrated composer. She had already appeared as a singer at the Opera House, and her beautiful voice and sweet face had secured her success.

Whatever possessed so delicate a creature to listen to the addresses of such an ugly ruffian as Theophilus Cibber, our Titania was married to this Bottom, and had bitter cause to repent it. It was now arranged that she should quit the lyric for the dramatic stage, and Colley gave her lessons. In 1736 she made her *entrée* at Drury Lane as Zara, in Aaron Hill's tragedy of that name, and leaped at once to the highest position of her art.

"Her great excellence," says Davies, "consisted in that simplicity which needed no ornament, in that sen-

sibility which despised all art—the harmony of her voice was as powerful as the animation of her look—in grief and tenderness, her eyes looked as if they swam in tears—in rage and despair they seemed to dart flashes of fire—in spite of the unimportance of her figure, she maintained a dignity in her action and a grace in her step.” Another writer says: “She was charming in every part she undertook, but she appeared to be identified with Ophelia.” Indeed, she may be regarded as the creator of the feminine ideal of the part. Its principal interpreters before her had been Mrs. Betterton and Mrs. Booth, who had received, through Davenant, the traditions of the boy-actresses of the pre-Restoration period. Garrick had doubted her ability to play Constance (“King John”). “Don’t tell me, Mr. Garrick,” said Quin; “that woman has a heart, and can do anything where passion is required.” The elder actor was right. Davies says she had no successor in the part; even Mrs. Yates fell below her. “It was her most perfect character. When going off the stage she uttered the words, ‘O Lord, my boy!’ with such an emphatical scream of agony as will never be forgotten by those who heard her.”

Another critic, describing her Juliet, says: “He who has seen Mrs. Cibber from the first suspicion of the draught not working as intended, rise to the terror of her waking before her time, finding herself encompassed with ‘reeking shanks and yellow chapless skulls,’ become distracted with the horror of the place, ‘plucking the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,’ till at length she shall ‘with some great kinsman’s bone madly dash out her desperate brains,’ has seen all that is possible to be conveyed, this way, of terror, and has had an exam-

ple of that gradation by which fire and spirit may be raised from the most slight step to the most exalted height."

Not content with squandering his wife's salary and neglecting her, Mr. Cibber, junior, played the part of Sir Pandarus, and introduced into his house a young gentleman of fortune, gave him every opportunity of forming a close intimacy with her, and then took a short journey to France. When he returned he began to rave about his injured honor, which could only be healed by five thousand pounds damages. But the court saw through the infamous business, and awarded him ten guineas, while his wife accepted the protection of the man to whom she had been betrayed, and passed with him the remainder of her life, unblamed by a sympathizing public.

Mrs. Cibber survived her wretched husband eight years. In January, 1766, she was carried from her house in Scotland Yard to the cloisters of the Abbey, where Mrs. Bracegirdle and Betterton had gone before her. "Then tragedy died with her," said Garrick upon hearing the sad news of her death. "And yet she was the greatest female plague belonging to my house. I could easily parry the artless thrusts and despise the coarse language of some of my other heroines; but whatever was Cibber's object, a new part or a new dress, she was always sure to carry her point by the acuteness of her invective and the steadiness of her perseverance."

Everybody conversant with theatrical history has heard of Charlotte Charke, Cibber's youngest child. From her childhood she gave indications of that strange disposition that was to render her whole life so notorious. Her favorite resort was the stable, and although she could

not use a needle, she could handle a curry-comb most dexterously. Shooting, hunting, riding, and digging were her favorite amusements. Once when a mere child she defended the house from an attack of thieves by firing pistols and blunderbusses out of the windows. When very young she was married to a celebrated violinist, but the match was a miserable one, and she went upon the stage and made her *début* in the small part of Mademoiselle in "The Provoked Wife" in 1730, being then twenty-seven years of age. She soon rose to such characters as Alicia, in "Jane Shore," and became a very creditable actress, in receipt of a good salary. But by-and-by she quarreled with the manager, abruptly quitted the stage, and opened a grocery and oil-shop in Long Acre. In three months, finding she knew nothing of the trade, she relinquished the business and set up a puppet-show in St. James's Street, Haymarket. Here she lost everything, and had to sell for twenty pounds what, she says, had cost her five hundred guineas. She had so offended her father that he had utterly discarded her; she now wrote a piece called "The Battle of the Poets," in which she scurrilously lampooned him. She was arrested for a small debt, and only released by a subscription of the most disreputable characters of Covent Garden. She then assumed male costume and wandered about the country with strolling players; a young lady fell in love with her and proposed marriage; then she engaged herself as valet to a nobleman; not remaining long in this situation, she took to making and selling sausages; then became head waiter at a tavern; after this she went back to strolling for a time, until by the assistance of an uncle she was enabled to open a tavern in Drury Lane; this, like all her other undertakings, proved unsuccessful.

For a short time she joined her brother at the Haymarket, but soon afterward the theatre was shut by an order of the Lord Chamberlain. Back to strolling and puppet-shows. In 1755 she published an autobiography, a very extraordinary book, and upon the proceeds opened another public-house, at Islington this time. In a few months she was again reduced to beggary. Her unhappy life came to an end in 1760.

CHAPTER III.

THE MODERN ROSCIUS.

Early Life of David Garrick.—He leaps into Fame at a Bound.—His Long Career of Superb and Uninterrupted Triumph.—His Great Impersonations and Judgments of Contemporaries on his Acting.—Private Character and Brilliant Farewell to the Stage.—Testimony of Fox, Burke, and Townshend.

THE Garrigues, the original form of the name, were of French extraction. The grandfather of the great actor was a refugee driven over to England by the revocation of the edict of Nantes. A son of his, an officer in the English army, married the daughter of a Lichfield parson, of Irish extraction, and one offspring of this marriage was David Garrick, born at Hereford, where his father, Captain Garrick, was then quartered, on February 19, 1716. The blood of three nationalities—French, Irish, English—was about equally mixed in his veins. He was educated at the Lichfield Grammar School, which he entered just as another future celebrity, a companion of his, Samuel Johnson, some seven years his senior, was leaving it.

By the time he was eleven years of age David had begun to feel the prickings of his inborn vocation, and had organized a company of juvenile players for the performance of Farquhar's "Recruiting Officer," in which he himself acted Kite, and one of his sisters the Chambermaid. A stop, however, was about this time put to such diversions by a summons from his uncle David, a wine merchant settled in Portugal, who proposed to take him into the business, and at eleven years old little David made the voyage to Lisbon, alone. But it is to be supposed that the business did not suit him, as in less than a twelvemonth we find him back in England entertaining his good Lichfield friends with more amateur performances.

The bright-eyed, clever, vivacious boy was a welcome guest at all the best houses, and more particularly at the officers' mess, in the little remote cathedral garrison town. More than one colonel offered him a cornetcy, which it is strange he did not accept—unless his secret mind was already bent upon the sock and buskin. When his father returned after a four years' absence, it was thought time to decide on a profession for him. Upon some deliberation the bar was chosen, and it was determined he should at once proceed to London, and enter himself at one of the Inns of Court.

Garrick's acquaintance with Samuel Johnson, afterward to be one of the great lights of English letters, commenced in 1736 at Edial, near Lichfield, in the relation of pupil and pedagogue. It ended with the two going to London together to seek their fortunes, Johnson with a tragedy in his pocket. Afterward when David became manager of Drury Lane, he produced this play out of friendship. But not even such actors as Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Pritchard, could redeem

its dullness. Hence arose the great doctor's spleen against actors, and pique against his friend Davy in particular. During this period, while Johnson was pursuing his weary round as a bookseller's hack, Garrick was industriously cutting his law studies and devoting as much time as possible to his darling playhouses, after each of which visits his prospective profession became more unendurable. Little thought the actors that there sat in one corner of the pit an obscure young country fellow who was noting their shortcomings, and thinking how differently he would act, and who was destined to sweep away all the mouthing, strutting, sing-song traditions of their effete school and bring about a marvelous revolution in their art. There is no doubt that even at this period his whole soul was absorbed by such thoughts, and only consideration for the prejudices of his family withheld him from thrusting himself upon the stage.

He had left Lichfield but a few weeks when the sad news of his father's death was brought to him. And soon afterward his uncle, the Lisbon wine merchant, who had come over to England, also died, bequeathing him one thousand pounds. His brother Peter, who had begun life as a midshipman, sank the little money the captain had left him in a wine business, and proposed that David should join him. Anything was better to his taste than the law, so he threw away his books and exchanged the bar for the cellar. The business was to be carried on both in Lichfield and London; Peter was to conduct the country branch, David the town. The cellars were in Durham Yard, upon the site of which the Adelphi Terrace was afterward raised. "He lived with three quarts of vinegar in a cellar, and called himself a wine merchant," said spiteful Foote.

But Davy could no more give his mind to wine than he could to the law. The London of 1738 was very different to the dull, nondescript Temple of Mammon it has become to-day. Between St. Paul's Cathedral and St. Martin's Church there lay a region where business, that leaden-headed fetich of this enlightened age, was not supremely worshiped; and where brains, astounding as the assertion may sound to the rising generation, were esteemed more than gold; it was the region of wits, authors, actors, books, theatres, coffee-houses, and taverns—a delightful region, quite Parisian in its gayety. All the wit and genius of England were to be found in the coffee-houses and taverns of Fleet Street and Covent Garden, forming a society as brilliant and more diverse than that of the French *salons*. But it was oligarchical; the vulgar mob, kept within its proper bounds, had not yet overflowed into and profaned every place of public resort so as to drive the refined into the exclusiveness of dull clubs or home life. The country gentleman who spent an evening at the Bedford or the Mitre had a memory of delight for the remainder of his life, and his less fortunate friends never wearied of listening to the descriptions of the celebrities he had seen there and the witty things he had heard from their lips. Such was the society into which David Garrick eagerly pushed his way and was well received; he was full of fire and spirit, he was not destitute of wit, and could already give excellent imitations of the marked peculiarities of the actors of the day. He made the acquaintance of a young player named McLaughlin, afterward so well known as Charles Macklin, who, like himself, was burning to reform the then style of acting. They became inseparable companions, and were to be seen at all times

of the day walking up and down beneath the Covent Garden Piazzas, discussing their theories; or at the Bedford at night, after the play, in company with another young fellow, one Samuel Foote, who was floating about among wits and players, spending his fortune as fast as he could, to be by-and-by enrolled a chief among both.

Through one of his theatrical friends, Giffard, the manager of an unlicensed theatre in Goodman's Fields, the young aspirant got chances to play some little parts, and shortly afterward again he appeared at Ipswich as Aboan in Southern's "Oroonoko;" as Chamont in Otway's "Orphan;" and Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's "Constant Couple."

All this time poor Peter was living with *his* three quarts of vinegar at Lichfield, in happy ignorance of his partner's doings, though a little troubled over the increasing difficulties of the firm. But the blow was coming fast. Upon his return to London, David seems to have applied for an engagement at both the patent houses. Finding no chance there, he was obliged to choose a humbler scene for his appearance in the metropolis, the unlicensed theatre in Goodman's Fields, where he made his *début* on October 19, 1741.

The *débutant* had many of his tavern and coffee-house friends in front, among others Macklin and "Gentleman" Smith. From his first soliloquy the audience could perceive that a new light had burst upon the stage; there was no drawl, no sing-song, no mouthing; all was new, natural, full of fire and passion; some of the points literally electrified them, as when he dashed away the prayer-book after his interview with the lord-mayor; his "Off with his head, so much for Buckingham;" his marvelous tent-scene, his wild châ-

otic fury in the last act, which had always before been a piece of measured declamation, his savage fight, his terrible death, in which his cruel fingers seemed in their agony digging their own grave. No such acting lingered in any living memory. The *Daily Post* said next morning that his reception "was the most extraordinary and great that was ever known on such an occasion." Assured of success, he wrote at once to Peter, acquainting him with the step he had taken, and trying to make an apology out of the badness of their business, and from the fact that he could make £300 a year by his new profession, which was more than he could ever hope to draw from the wine trade. Peter, his brothers and sisters, and all Lichfield society, were of course horrified and outraged at a man sinking from the elevation of a poor tradesman to be an exponent of Shakespeare, and there were pitiful lamentations over the family disgrace. A few months afterward, when David had already become a great man, the disgraced family were not at all backward in requesting and receiving favors continually from such a disreputable source.

For some nights the receipts at Goodman's Fields did not average above £30 nightly; but the fame of the new actor was being rapidly spread. By-and-by came the rush, and the carriages extended from Temple Bar to Whitechapel. Pope was drawn from Twickenham to see this prodigy, and the sight of the little black figure in the boxes at first greatly disconcerted the actor. "That young man never had an equal, and will never have a rival," was the great poet's expressed opinion. Then came Pitt, who pronounced him to be "the only actor in England," and Halifax, Chesterfield, and Sandwich, who invited him to dine with them. His terms

were increased from one pound a night to half the profits. Quin came to see him and called him the Whitfield of the stage, which was very appropriate; only his prophecy that the people would soon get tired of the novelty and go back to their church was not so happy. Soon the patent theatres, now deserted, were glad to make overtures to him, and he accepted an engagement for Drury Lane at £600 per annum for the ensuing season.

It was on December 1, 1741, that, dropping his fictitious name on the occasion of his benefit, he first appeared in the bills as David Garrick. He continued to play in the east until the 29th of May in the following year. From November to that time he appeared in nineteen different characters—Richard, Chamont, Lothario, the Ghost (in “Hamlet”), Aboan, Lear, and Pierre, in tragedy. In comedy, among others, Fondlewife, Bayes, in the “Rehearsal,” in which he gave his imitations of actors, Lord Foppington, Johnny the Schoolboy, Duretete, etc. At the end of the Drury Lane season he appeared for three nights to crowded houses as Richard, Bayes, and Lear.

During the summer he played at Dublin, where his success was as prodigious as it had been in London; so great was the crowd that an epidemic, the product of heat and dirt, broke out, which was called the Garrick fever. There he was given the name of Roscius. During an engagement of two months he took three benefits; for the last he appeared as Hamlet for the first time. This, according to contemporary accounts, must have been a very beautiful performance, full of refinement and sensitiveness. Partridge’s immortal criticism will occur to every reader of Fielding.

"You may call me a coward if you will, but if that little man there upon the stage is not frightened, I never saw a man frightened in my life. . . . Did you not yourself observe afterward when he found out it was his father's spirit, and how he was murdered in the garden, how his fear forsook him by degrees, and he was struck dumb with sorrow, as it were, just as I should have been had it been my own case. . . . He the best player! why, I could act as well as he myself. I am sure if I had seen a ghost I should have looked in the same manner, and done just as he did."

He introduced many new readings and much new business, that were eagerly discussed at the time, but which remained orthodox until Fechter swept them away.

Upon returning to London, he, Macklin, and Woffington kept house together at No. 6 Bow Street, each undertaking the management for a month. The partnership did not long endure; Peggy's extravagances not being acceptable to careful David. It is now we begin to hear stories of his meanness and avarice, upon which Foote and so many others exercised their wit and their malice throughout his life—and after it. "Peggy made the tea too strong," says one. Well, it is impossible for a man to ever shake off his early impressions; in the old Lichfield time, when the captain was away in Gibraltar, the tea had, doubtless, to be eked out—it was an expensive article then—and the question of even a few grains was one of importance in the needy officer's family; David had not forgotten those days, and could not endure wastefulness, more honor to him. There is another story told of his walking up and down before his house one evening with some person of great importance from whom he could not break away abruptly, and seeing

through the dining-room window a thief in one of the candles guttering it down to the socket, and of the almost agony he endured at the sight. The anecdote is told as an illustration of his meanness; but would it not be more just to ascribe it to his horror of waste? So thought Johnson, and no man was at times more harsh and bitter in his judgment of the player who had outstripped him on the road to fame and fortune. "I know," he said, defending him against Wilkes, who said he would play *Scrub* all his life—"I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with; and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life; so, when he came to have money, he probably was unskillful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could."

The Drury Lane fund for decayed actors is a noble instance of his munificence. It was first started under his management, and his various donations to it amounted to nearly five thousand pounds. And after his death it was found he had a whole host of small annuitants. It might have vexed David Garrick to have tea unnecessarily strong, or to have seen "a thief" guttering his candle, or to have uselessly squandered a halfpenny, but he could be princely generous for all that.

In the following season Garrick made a great hit by his revival of *Shakespeare's "Macbeth."* "What, haven't I been playing *Shakespeare's 'Macbeth?'*" cried Quin. Indeed he had not, but a garbled version of the text, very little resembling the original. *Macbeth* was a part then little esteemed by tragedians; it was Garrick who first developed, theatrically, its marvelous power. He had

not yet Mrs. Pritchard for his lady. How wonderfully those two acted together in that wonderful play, although he did act the thane in scarlet coat and white wig, has been described too frequently to call for special mention.

His Othello, however, was a failure. His appearance was against him; his black face—for the Moor was a nigger in those days—and his small figure clad in the scarlet uniform of a British officer must have produced rather a comic *coup d'œil*. Quin was in the pit on the first night, and when he entered exclaimed, loud enough to be heard upon the stage, “Here’s Pompey, by —, where’s the lamp and the tea-kettle?” (alluding to Hogarth’s black boy). In the next season Barry came with his splendid and majestic figure, and drew all London to see him as the noble Moor. Upon which Garrick very wisely abandoned the part.

David went to Covent Garden. It was the most critical, indeed the turning, point of his career. Barry was drawing crowds by his Othello, Lord Townly, Macbeth, etc., and now he, Garrick, was to be pitted against Quin upon the same boards, the two styles of acting were to be brought face to face, put upon their trial, and judgment to be pronounced. It was the battle of the old and new school, and no quarter would be given. The excitement was enormous. The theatre was an institution in those days, and its wars and rivalries were to intellectual London a subject of almost as much importance as had been the Scottish rebellion. It was on the 14th of November, 1746, in Rowe’s “Fair Penitent,” the duel took place. Cumberland, then a youth, was present, and has bequeathed us a most graphic picture of the event.

“I have the spectacle even now before my eyes. Quin presented himself, on the rising of the curtain, in a green velvet coat, embroidered down the seams, an enormous full-bottomed periwig, rolled stockings, and high-heeled, square-toed shoes. With very little variation of cadence, and in a deep, full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action, which had more of the senate than the stage in it, he rolled out his heroies with an air of dignified indifference, that seemed to disdain the plaudits that were bestowed upon him. Mrs. Cibber, in a key high-pitched but sweet withal, sang, or rather recitatively, Rowe’s harmonious strain, something in the manner of the *Improvistores*; it was so extremely wanting in contrast, that, though it did not wound the ear, it wearied it. When she had once recited two or three speeches, I could anticipate the manner of every succeeding one; it was like a long, old legendary ballad of innumerable stanzas, every one of which is sung to the same tune eternally, chiming in the ear without variation or relief. Mrs. Pritchard was an actress of a different cast, had more nature, and of course more change of tone, and variety both of action and expression; in my opinion the comparison was decidedly in her favor; but when after long and eager expectation I saw little Garrick, then young and light, and alive in every muscle and in every feature, come bounding on the stage, and pointing at the wittol Altamont and heavy-paced Horatio—heavens, what a transition!—it seemed as if a whole century had been swept over in the transition of a single scene; old things were done away, and a new order at once brought forward, bright and luminous, and clearly destined to dispel the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age, too long attached to prejudices of custom, and superstitiously devoted to the illusions of imposing declamation. This heaven-born actor was struggling then to emancipate his audience from the slavery they were resigned to, yet in general they seemed *to love darkness better than light*, and in the dialogue of altercation between Horatio and Lothario bestowed far the

greater show of hands upon the master of the old school than upon the founder of the new."

After this the two rivals appeared as Falstaff and Hotspur; here Quin had the best, for his fat knight was a great performance, and Percy was not one of Garrick's successful parts. But in "Jane Shore" the tables were again turned: Quin strutted and bellowed through Glo'ster, but Garrick played Hastings superbly, and it continued to be one of his finest impersonations. That splendid comedy too, "The Suspicious Husband," gave him an opening for such comedy-acting as had never been witnessed before in that generation. Nothing more dashing, vivacious, and artistic than his Ranger could be conceived.

The next year he went into partnership with Lacy, in the Drury-Lane patent. He had come off best against Quin; he now entered the lists against the man who was dividing with him the favor of the town—Spranger Barry. It was a grand company: Garrick, Barry, and Macklin, the leading men; Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Clive, were among the ladies. Quin had retired in disgust; Macklin was the Shylock; Barry the Hamlet, Othello, Pierre; Garrick the Archer, Abel Drugger, Lear, Richard, Sir John Brute, Hamlet, Macbeth; and the two appeared together as Chamont and Castalio ("The Orphan"), Lothario and Horatio ("Fair Penitent"), Jaffier and Pierre ("Venice Preserved"). How one envies one's ancestors who beheld these splendid intellectual contests! The next season witnessed the revival of "Romeo and Juliet," with Barry and Mrs. Cibber, but it was played only once: the *furore* was to come. Garrick's great triumph was Benedick, with Mrs. Pritchard as Beatrice—two splendid per-

formances. That year he married the beautiful Mdlle. Violetta, the dancer, the *protégée* of my lord and lady Burlington. There was plenty of romance and mystery about this young lady. She had come over from Vienna a few years previously disguised as a boy, and made her *début* at the Opera House in the Haymarket. She was immediately taken under the protection of Lady Burlington, whose daughters used to frequently stand at the wings with wraps to throw round her when she came off from her dance. Her *début* had been patronized by the king himself, and the noblest houses were thrown open to her. Some said she was a natural daughter of Lord Burlington's whom he had discovered while travelling abroad from her likeness to her mother, a lady to whom he had been devotedly attached; others, that she was the illegitimate offspring of some noble Austrian. Be this as it may, she was received in the best society. Seeing Garrick play one night she fell desperately in love with him, they met in society, and afterward in secret. But Lady Burlington was violently opposed to the match; the story of Robertson's play of "David Garrick" is said to be founded upon an incident of this love-affair; but the real catastrophe was very different to the fictitious one; for the countess, touched by the actor's generous self-sacrifice, gave her consent to the marriage. Ten thousand pounds were settled upon the bride—six thousand by the Burlingtons, four thousand by Garrick himself. They took up their abode in Southampton Street, Strand, a not unfashionable neighborhood then. The house is still standing, No. 27, and the little back room in which they used to breakfast is said to be little changed.

1750-'51 was the celebrated "Romeo and Juliet"

season. Barry and Mrs. Cibber had withdrawn to Covent Garden. Barry insinuated in a prologue that they had been driven from Drury Lane by Garrick's arrogance and selfishness—the latter might well have retorted the accusation. It was now Quin *versus* Barry, and as the veteran received one thousand pounds for his services that season he does not seem to have come off worst. On the 28th of September, 1750, "Romeo and Juliet" was performed at both houses. At Covent Garden, Barry was the Romeo, Macklin the Mercutio, Mrs. Cibber the Juliet. At Drury Lane the parts were sustained by Garrick, Woodward, and Mrs. Bellamy. All the town was divided between these rival claims. Barry's noble presence, handsome face, and silver-toned voice gave him great personal advantages; the balcony scene of this most exquisite of the stage lovers was unapproachable; but Garrick excelled in the scene with the Friar. "Had I been Juliet to Garrick's Romeo," said a lady critic, "so impassioned was he that I should have expected he would have come up to me. But had Barry been my lover, so seductive was he that I should certainly have jumped down to him." Of the Juliets Mrs. Cibber was more passionately pathetic; Bellamy more lovely, more impulsive, more natural.

Barry played Romeo twelve nights, Garrick thirteen; the town was astounded at this prodigious run, and wrote epigrams upon it.

"'Well, what's to-night?' says angry Ned,
As up from bed he rouses;
'Romeo again!' he shakes his head,
'A plague on both your houses!'"

Six years later the rivalry of the two great actors in King Lear created an equal excitement. The palm had

decidedly been given to Barry's Romeo, the best proof of which is that Garrick afterward omitted it from his rôle; but in Lear the victory was as decidedly Garrick's. It was probably his sublimest effort in tragedy. His curse was so awful that it is said the audience shrank and cowered before it as from a blast of lightning; the mad scene was an inspiration, and in the overwhelming pathos of the last act the house resounded with the sobs of the audience. One night even one of the sentinels, who were then placed on each side the proscenium during the performance, was seen weeping at his post. That most marvelous of all Shakespeare's conceptions had never before and certainly has never since found such a delineator.

Two epigrams of the many passed about on the occasion are admirably suggestive of the styles of the two great actors :

“The town has found out different ways
 To praise the different Lears !
To Barry they give loud huzzas !
 To Garrick—only tears.”

“A king—nay, every inch a king,
 Such as Barry doth appear ;
But Garrick's quite a diff'rent thing,
 He's every inch King Lear.”

Turn we aside for a moment from the glitter and noise and envy of the stage to glance at the home life of the actor, of which Mr. Fitzgerald, in his admirable “Life,” presents us with several charming pictures. In 1754 he purchased a villa at Hampton, on the edge of the common. “About it were pretty grounds, though separated by the high-road from the pleasant sward that

ran down to the river's edge, where, within a year, he was building that little bit of affectation more fitted to Drury Lane than to the little country villa—the Shakespeare Temple." Hither came the vicar, "an old clergyman of simple tastes," whom the player's kind interest procured something better than his Hampton living of fifty pounds a year—to chat with Mrs. Garrick over gardening matters.

He loved children, although he had none of his own. During the run of the "Jubilee" he ordered a nightly distribution of tarts to the little ones who played the fairies, and used to delight in watching their enjoyment of them. Cumberland relates how he would imitate turkey-cocks, peacocks, and water-wagtails for the amusement of his children. Here is a reminiscence of childhood by the younger Colman :

"I always ran about his gardens, where he taught me the game of trap ball. He practised, too, a thousand monkey tricks upon me; he was Punch, harlequin, a cat in a gutter, then King Lear, with a mad touch that at times almost terrified me; and he had a peculiar mode of flashing the lightning of his eye, by darting it into the astonished mind of a child, as a serpent is said to fascinate a bird; which was an attribute belonging only to this theatrical Jupiter."

In 1758, finding his power of attraction waning—the houses are said to have fallen as low as thirty, fifteen, and one night five pounds—he resolved to retire for a time and recruit his health, by no means good, by a tour of the Continent. At Paris he was received at all the *salons* with the greatest honor. There he gave some specimens of his power that filled the spectators with wonder and admiration. Grimm wrote enthusiastically

of him ; Marmontel pronounced his to be the only real style of acting—" You will be to me," he said, " a continual subject of regret."

There is a good story told in illustration of his powers. A Lichfield grocer had come up with a letter of recommendation to David from his brother Peter. Arriving in London in the evening, he went into the two-shilling gallery to see the wonderful actor of whom he had heard so much, intending to deliver his credentials next morning. But Garrick played that night Abel Drugger, and so disgusted the honest grocer that he would not go near him. " Well," he said to Peter, on his return home, and giving him back his letter, " though Mr. Garrick be your brother, he is one of the shabbiest, meanest, most pitiful hounds I ever saw in the whole course of my life."

" Nature," says Cumberland, " had done so much for him that he could not help being an actor. She gave him a frame of so manageable a proportion, and, from its flexibility, so perfectly under command, that by its aptitude and elasticity he could draw it out to fit any sizes of character that tragedy could offer to him, and contract it to any scale of ridiculous diminution that his Abel Drugger, Scrub, or Fribble could require of him to sink it to. His eye in the mean time was so penetrating, so speaking, his brow so movable, and all his features so plastic and so accommodating, that wherever his mind impelled them they would go ; and before his tongue could give the text, his countenance would express the spirit and passion of the part he was charged with."

He came back to London in 1766 ; he was not long in doubt as to his reception ; he created a *furore* greater than all that had gone before, the house was nightly crammed to overflowing, and people of the highest con-

dition bribed the attendants to admit them by a private door to avoid the terrible crush at the public entrance.

As the years passed on, he played less frequently, much of his time being spent in visits to the seats of many noblemen and gentlemen who were proud to call him friend, until the advance of age, failing health, and above all the carpings of malicious critics, who began to tell him that he was too old for Ranger and Hamlet, warned him it was time to quit forever the scene of his brilliant triumphs. The announcement of his farewell performances created a great sensation ; people came up to town from all parts of the country—no small feat in those days—and even foreigners came over to England to witness them ; the highest persons in the land fought at the thronged doors for admittance and very frequently failed. He played a round of all his great parts. “Last night,” he writes in one place, “I played Abel Drugger for the last time. I thought the audience were cracked, they almost turned my brain.” Hannah More, who came up from Bristol for these representations, says :

“I pity those who have not seen him. Posterity will never be able to form the slightest idea of his perfection. The more I see him the more I admire. I have seen him within these three weeks take leave of Benedick, Sir John Brute, Kitely, Abel Drugger, Archer, and Leon. It seems to me as if I was assisting at the obsequies of the different poets. I feel almost as much pain as pleasure.”

It was on the 10th of June, 1776, that he made his last appearance, as Don Felix in “The Wonder,” and never, it was said, did he play with more fire and energy, more lightness and animation. Then in a short speech broken by tears he wished the audience farewell, and, with a

long and lingering gaze on the vast concourse before him, scarcely a face of which but was bedewed with sympathetic tears, slowly retired. “Farewell—farewell!” echoed a hundred voices choked with emotion, as he passed behind the curtain which was never again to rise upon him.

Not long did he enjoy his retirement. Within three years afterward there was a magnificent funeral procession to Westminster Abbey ; the line of carriages reached from the Strand to the Sacred Building ; the streets were crowded with spectators ; the Bishop of Rochester received the coffin ; the Duke of Devonshire, the Earls Camden, Ossory, Spencer, and Lord Palmerston were pall-bearers ; Burke, Fox, and other celebrities stood beside the grave that was ready to receive the mortal remains of the great actor. His brother George survived him but a few days. He had always been David's factotum, and his first inquiry on entering the theatre at night was : “Has David wanted me ?” Some one was remarking upon the singularity of his dying so soon after his brother. “Oh,” answered Bannister, who was by, “David wanted him.” Of the respect in which Garrick was held, a proof was given not long before his death. One night he was the sole occupant of the gallery of the House of Commons during a fierce discussion between two members, one of whom moved that he should be ordered to withdraw. Burke sprang up indignantly and opposed the motion to expel the man who, he said, had taught them all they knew ; Fox and Townshend followed in the same strain, calling him their preceptor.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLES MACKLIN.

A Centenarian Actor, the Author of "Love à la Mode," and "The Man of the World," and the First Great Representative of Shylock.—Sketch of a Long and Striking Career.—The Original of Sir Archy McSarcasm and Sir Pertinax McSycophant.—Farewell to the Stage at Ninety-nine Years of Age.

A MAN who played with the contemporaries of the actors of the Restoration, and yet who might have heard Braham sing; who lived upon the confines of two centuries and nearly saw a third, must be remarkable, if only as an instance of abnormal longevity, and as a link uniting far-sundered generations. Charles Macklin's birth is believed to have been in 1690, about two months before the battle of the Boyne, in which his father was engaged, on the side of King James. His real name was McLaughlin, afterward abbreviated to suit Saxon tongues and prejudices. As a child he ran wild on a small farm in Ulster, but was afterward taken to be educated by his uncle, a Catholic priest, who soon gave him up in despair. At fourteen he was apprenticed to a saddler in Dublin, but neglected his business sadly for the low pot-houses, where he became notorious for his wit, songs, and powers of mimicry. He finally became a strolling player at twenty, playing in barns in England and Ireland. He showed from the first daring and originality, and shared those ideas of acting which Garrick so splendidly illustrated for the reform of the English stage.

After years of vagabondage, Rich engaged him to appear in London in 1725, as Alcander in "Œdipus." The manager did not approve of the aforesaid ideas. "I spoke

so familiar," Macklin used to say, when relating the story, "and so little in the hoity-toity tone of the tragedy of that day, that he told me I had better go to grass for a year or two." So he went back to strolling, played tragedy at Southwark fair, and harlequin at Sadler's Wells. He made himself distinguished as a boon companion and three-bottle man, a great athlete and boxer, and a gallant. Still, when he returned to London in 1730, he had no reputation; to compensate, however, he had plenty of experience, self-reliance, and daring.

In 1733 he joined Fleetwood's company at Drury Lane, where he appeared with considerable success, and finally became chief adviser and stage-manager of the theatre. Fleetwood, though a gentleman by birth, was a spendthrift, and not particular whom he victimized. So Macklin paid dearly for his friendship, and was at last induced to go his bond for three thousand pounds. This the actor finally succeeded in relieving himself of by a cunning ruse.

On one very momentous occasion, however, Fleetwood had stood his friend; it was when he was arrested on a charge of murder. The fatal affair rose out of a practical joke. An actor named Hallam had taken away a wig which Macklin wore in the farce; a quarrel ensued, and violent language on both sides; finally, Macklin thrust at the other with his cane, intending to push him out of the green-room, but the point, glancing upward, entered the unfortunate man's eye, penetrated to the brain, and killed him upon the spot. Macklin was tried for murder at the Old Bailey. Fleetwood used all his influence for him, and the jury brought it in manslaughter, but without malice aforethought, and the actor was released.

He was known at this time by the nickname of the "Wild Irishman," and his violent temper frequently got him into quarrels. He had one with Quin, in which, however, the latter was the aggressor, that might have had as fatal a termination as that just related. They were playing together in Wycherly's "Plain Dealer;" Quin was Manly; Macklin, Jerry Blackaeres. The latter, introducing some comic business in one of Manly's scenes, raised a laugh, much to the disgust of the arrogant tragedian, who, upon coming off, told him insolently not to come any of his — tricks with him. Macklin replied that he had no idea of disturbing him, and only desired to show himself off a bit. In the next scene they had together, the laugh was repeated, and Quin again abused him. Macklin, growing a little warm, replied he could not play differently. Quin said he must and should, and the other gave him the lie direct. Upon which Quin, who was eating an apple, spit a mouthful into his hand, and threw it in the actor's face. The Irish blood was boiling in a moment. Seizing hold of him, Macklin thrust him into a chair, and pummeled his face until it was so swollen he could scarcely speak. Quin demanded satisfaction, and said he would wait for him at the Obelisk in Covent Garden, after the performance. Macklin, however, had to play in the pantomime, during which Fleetwood came to him, told him he should not keep the appointment, and to prevent the meeting took him home to supper and made him sleep at his house. In the morning he advised him to end the matter by making some sort of an apology to the tragedian. Quin was the bully of the theatre, feared both by manager and actors, and Macklin won great renown by his spirited conduct. But Quin never forgave him, and ever after-

ward spoke of him with the most bitter malice. For years they never spoke to one another; but one day, after attending the funeral of a brother actor, Quin, Macklin, and some others, retired to a tavern in Covent Garden, to spend the evening. One by one their companions went away, until at six o'clock the next morning they were left alone over their cups. There was a long pause of embarrassment on both sides, until at length Quin broke the ice and drank Macklin's health; Macklin returned the compliment. Then, after another pause, Quin said: "There has been a foolish quarrel, sir, between you and me, which, though accommodated, I must confess, I have not been able to entirely forget till now. If you can forget it, give me your hand, and let us in future live together like brother actors." The reconciliation was sealed by a fresh bottle, to which another and another succeeded, until Quin became so drunk he was not able to speak or move. A chair was sent for, but could not be got. Upon which Macklin, with the assistance of a couple of waiters, raised the ponderous burden upon his back and carried it fast asleep to its lodgings under the Covent Garden piazza.

Macklin had been some years a member of the Drury Lane company, and, although esteemed as a sound and useful actor, had made no mark. Casting about in his thoughts for some character especially adapted to his powers, he bethought him of Shylock. Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" had not been acted since 1701, a spurious version by Lord Lansdowne, called "The Jew of Venice," having usurped its place, in which Shylock was degraded to a kind of low-comedy part. Macklin, resolving to restore the original text, imparted his ideas to Fleetwood, who at length, in 1741, gave a reluctant

consent to the revival. When it was known that he intended to play the Jew as a serious character, the actors laughed in their sleeves, and gleefully prophesied a dead failure.

His keen observation and suspicious temper could read their thoughts, and he determined to encourage their belief and render their discomfiture the greater. At a rehearsal, while requesting the others to do their best, he himself went through the part tamely and ineffectively. The plot succeeded, and the performers went about saying: "This hot-headed, conceited Irishman, having got some little reputation in a few parts, is going to take advantage of the manager's favor to bring himself and the theatre into disgrace." Fleetwood was appealed to, and begged him to give up the part. Upon which Macklin was obliged to confess the game he was playing. "I am only deceiving a set of men who envy me," he said; "but I'll pledge my life on the success of the play." There had been so much talk and so many predictions and arguments over this revival, that it caused considerable sensation among play-goers; and on the night of the first representation, the house was crowded, and with people of fashion. From the first he could perceive that he had a firm hold upon the audience, and from the critics in the pit he could hear: "Very well, very well indeed!" "This man seems to know what he is about."

"These encomiums," he said, "warned but did not overset me. I knew where I should have the pull, which was in the third act, and reserved myself accordingly. At this period I threw out all my fire; and as the contrasting passions of joy for the merchant's losses and grief for the elopement of Jessica open a fine field for an actor's powers, I had the good fortune

to please beyond my wildest expectation. The whole house was in an uproar of applause. When I went behind the scenes the manager complimented me very highly on my performance, and significantly added, 'Macklin, you were right at last.' My brethren in the green-room joined in his eulogium, but with different views. He was thinking of the increase of his treasury, they only of saving appearances—wishing at the same time I had broken my neck in the attempt. The trial scene wound up the fullness of my reputation: here I was well listened to; and here I made such a silent yet forcible impression upon the audience that I retired from this great attempt well satisfied. On my return to the green-room after the play was over, it was crowded with nobility and critics, who all complimented me in the warmest and most unbounded manner; and the situation I felt myself in, I must confess, was one of the most flattering and intoxicating of my whole life. No money, no title, could purchase what I felt. And let no man tell me after this what fame will not inspire a man to do, and how far the attainment of it will not remunerate his greatest labors. By G—, sir, though I was not worth fifty pounds in the world at the time, yet, let me tell you, I was Charles the Great for that night."

The success was enormous, and, alternated with other pieces, the "Merchant of Venice" ran through the entire season, drawing crowded houses. Macklin received an invitation to dine with Bolingbroke, Pope, and other celebrities, at Battersea. The latter's couplet on his performance—

"This is the Jew
That Shakespeare drew"—

is well known; and upon his taking a benefit, on the nineteenth night of the run, Bolingbroke sent him a purse containing twenty guineas—such a present being then considered a compliment. He was undoubtedly the

greatest Shylock that had appeared, at least since the days of Shakespeare, and remained unapproachable until Edmund Kean took up the part.

Fleetwood became so deeply in debt with the actors that there was a general revolt of the company. Consequent on this occurred the celebrated quarrel between Garrick and Macklin, who had been great friends and pledged to stand by each other. On Garrick's return to the theatre, Macklin was terribly incensed, and would receive no apology or explanation. He went everywhere retailing his grievances, and filled the theatre with his friends on Garrick's reappearance. The great man was hissed off the stage, and the riot grew so as to make it necessary to drop the curtain. The next night the manager solved the problem, by calling to his help the *élite* of Hockley-in-the-Hole and all the pugilists he could muster. On the recurrence of the uproar, the prize-fighting legion charged in solid phalanx and cleared the pit, so that the performance went on unruffled by the Macklinites.

This affair made a great stir at the time; for then it was said there were four estates—the King, the Lords, the Commons, and the Theatres. Macklin never forgave Garrick, and always afterward took every occasion to say bitter and sarcastic things; though the latter continued to treat the irate Irishman with kindness, and a year or two afterward gave him the use of Drury Lane for a farewell benefit, when he contemplated quitting the stage. He also reengaged him and his wife, when Macklin returned to the boards, which could scarcely spare him, in spite of the constellation of talent then glittering in the drama.

Macklin, after his quarrel, oscillated from one theatre

to another, fighting with his managers and continually discontented, till, in 1753, he quitted the theatre to carry out an eccentric enterprise. From the incubation of such ideas to their parturition he knew no rest. The craze on this occasion was to become a licensed victualler, the landlord of a tavern under the Covent Garden piazza, and to open a school of oratory, which he called by the extraordinary title of "The British Inquisition." The advertisement by which the latter undertaking was heralded is so extraordinary that it is worth transcribing:

"At Macklin's Great Room in Hart Street, Covent Garden, this day, being the 21st of November, will be opened

"THE BRITISH INQUISITION.

"This Institution is upon the plan of the ancient Greek, Roman, and modern French and Italian societies of liberal investigation. Such subjects in arts, sciences, literature, criticism, philosophy, history, politics, and morality as shall be found useful and entertaining to society will be there lectured upon and freely debated; particularly Mr. Macklin intends to lecture upon the Comedy of the Ancients, the use of their masks and flutes, their mimes and pantomimes, and the use and abuse of the stage. He will likewise lecture upon the rise and progress of the modern Theatres, and make a comparison between them and those of Greece and Rome, and between each other he proposes also to lecture upon each of Shakespeare's plays; to consider the original stories whence they are taken; the artificial or inartificial use, according to the laws of the drama, that Shakespeare has made of them; his fable, moral character, passion, manners, will likewise be criticised, and how his capital characters have been acted heretofore, are acted, and ought to be acted. And as the design of this inquiry is to endeavor at an acquisition of truth in matters of taste, particularly theatrical, the lecture being ended any gentleman may offer his thoughts upon the subject.

"The doors will be open at five, the lecture begin precisely at seven o'clock, every Monday and Friday evening.

"There is a public ordinary every day at four o'clock, price three shillings, each person to drink port, claret, or whatever liquor he shall choose."

Now, as Macklin understood nothing of Greek and Latin, he could not discourse very learnedly upon the classical drama; as his knowledge of French was not sufficient to even read the language, he could not obtain much assistance from that next best source; and as he was totally ignorant of the contemporary literature of Shakespeare, he could scarcely be expected to throw much light upon the originals of his plots. The whole affair consequently degenerated into something very like burlesque, which was greatly intensified by the portentous gravity with which Macklin, attired in full dress, gave forth his nothings. The wits made merry over it, more especially Foote, who seldom missed one of the lectures or joining in the discussion that followed. One night the subject of the discourse was on the cause of the prevalence of dueling in Ireland. The lecturer, tracing back the early history of the country, had got as far as Elizabeth, when Foote rose up and intimated that he desired to say something. "Well, sir, and what have you got to say upon this subject?" demanded Macklin. "Only to crave a little attention. I think I can settle the point in a few words," replied Foote. "What o'clock is it?" "What has that to do with the question, sir?" "Everything: will you please to answer me?" Very much annoyed, Macklin pulled out his watch, and told him it was half-past ten. "Very well," pursued Foote, "about this time every gentleman in Ireland who can possibly afford it is in his third bottle of claret, and

in a fair way of getting drunk; from drunkenness he proceeds to quarreling, from quarreling to dueling, and there's an end of the chapter." Amid the laughter that followed, Macklin in great dudgeon shut up his book, and brought the lecture to a close. In the following summer Foote gave burlesque lectures, *à la* Macklin, at the Haymarket. Macklin told Garrick one day he intended to decide in the next lecture the claims of the rival Romeos, then agitating the town. Garrick was anxious to know how he proposed to do.

"I mean to show your different merits in the garden scene. Barry comes into it, sir, as a great lord, swaggering about his love and talking so loud that, if we don't suppose the servants of the Capulet family almost dead with sleep, they must have come out and tossed him in a blanket. Well, sir, after having fixed my auditors' attention to this part, then I shall ask: But how does Garrick act this? Why, sir, sensible that the family are at enmity with him and his house, he comes creeping in upon his toes, whispering his love, and looking about him like a thief in the night."

From the lecture-room let us take a glimpse at the tavern. Dinner was announced by public advertisement to be ready at four o'clock, and as the clock struck the hour a bell affixed to the top of the house was rung for five minutes. Ten minutes afterward the dinner was served, and then the room-door was closed and no other person was admitted. Macklin himself, in full dress, always brought in the first dish, then with a low bow retired to the sideboard, where he remained with his two principal waiters, one on each side of him. He had had the servants under training for months previously; they were not allowed to open their lips save to answer the

guests, and they communicated with each other while in the room only by signs. "From whom do you think I picked up these signs?" he inquired of Foote one day. "Can't say, I'm sure," was the reply. "From no less a person than James, Duke of York, who, you know, sir, first invented signs for the Fleet." "And it will be very good poetical justice," responded the wit, "as from the fleet they were taken, so to the *Fleet* [prison] both master and signals are likely to return!"

Both the ordinary and "The British Inquisition" turning out failures, Macklin sought about for a new idea. It appeared in the form of a scheme to build a new theatre in Dublin, in which he induced Barry, the actor, to join. He went over to Ireland to overlook the workmen, and, full of his recent studies, pestered them so much about the way in which the ancient Greek theatres were constructed as to impede the work. But ere it could be opened, he had quarreled with Barry about parts: he desired to alternate the leading characters of tragedy, the Macbeths and Hamlets, with him. Barry, perfectly aware that he would fail in them, objected; the other insisted, and the end of the matter was that the partnership was dissolved, and Barry engaged him only as an actor. Macklin has been praised for his correct judgment, but it certainly did not extend to a just estimate of his own capabilities, or he would never have played Mercutio, as he did once, or have desired to appear in "Macbeth" or "Hamlet." The New Crown Street Theatre was opened in October, 1758, but by December, 1759, we find him entering into an engagement with the opposition house. It was never fulfilled, however, and he went back to Drury Lane at a large salary.

He now appears in a new character—that of dramatic author. As early as 1745 he had written a piece entitled “Henry VII., or the Popish Impostor,” upon the subject of Perkin Warbeck. It was an extraordinary production, in which Henry was represented as a Protestant champion, and Warbeck as the representative of the papacy. The production had as great a success as it deserved. But in December, 1759, he produced in Dublin his farcical comedy of “Love à la Mode,” and soon afterward a very similar work, entitled “The True Born Irishman,” intended to ridicule the absurd affectations of Irish ladies upon their return from England. Both pieces were very successful. With his usual restlessness he soon migrated from the Crow Street Theatre to that in Smock Alley, where, in 1764, he brought out a two-act farce entitled “The True Born Scotchman,” afterward elaborated into the famous comedy of “The Man of the World.” There is a curious story told of the first run of this piece. “One morning a young Scotch nobleman, who stood high in favor at the castle, sent Macklin a handsome suit of laced - dress clothes, with a letter, in which he begged his acceptance of that present as a small mark of the pleasure he had received from the exhibition of so fine a picture of his grandfather!” The next season he returned to Crow Street—and to England in 1767. Then back again to Ireland, alternating between Crow Street and Smock Alley, as he quarreled with one and made friends with the other manager.

In 1772 he opened a correspondence with Colman, preparatory to commencing an engagement at Covent Garden, one of the principal stipulations of which was that he should perform *Richard*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*,

parts which he had never yet played in London, but in which, being now eighty-three, he was ambitious of appearing. The treaty was concluded. But soon afterward, Smith, who had been disappointed of an engagement elsewhere, joined the company. He was in possession of the leading tragedy-parts, and Colman found some difficulty in adjusting the claims of the rival tragedians. At length it was arranged that they should alternate the parts, as Garrick and Barry had done in previous seasons. But as soon as Smith heard that Macklin was to open in *Richard*, he claimed that privilege. This was the beginning of a quarrel that led to serious consequences. Macklin was certainly unfitted for such parts, and the only one of the three he obtained was *Macbeth*, which, under his directions, was produced with an approach to correctness in scenery, costume, and adjuncts, never before attempted. Garrick's scarlet coat was discarded, and for the first time the Thane appeared in the dress of a Highland chieftain, which costume was retained until Charles Kean's great revival of the tragedy.

Macklin's figure was never calculated to represent the dignity of a warrior, and in his first scene, when the audience saw a clumsy old man, who looked more like a Scotch piper than a great general, stumping down the stage at the head of a supposed conquering army, it impressed them only with a sense of the ridiculous and absurd. His address to the witches and his first scene with Lady Macbeth are said to have been very fine; but he totally failed in the dagger-scene as well as in the banquet-scene. There were some notable points in the last act, especially his speech to the messenger who brings him the news that Birnam Wood is moving—"If

thou speak'st false," etc.—the terrible menace of which is said to have thrilled the audience. But, on the whole, the performance seems to have been rather a lecture upon the part than a theatrical representation. Arthur Murphy, praising its correctness, judgment, and energy, happily styled it "A black-letter copy of *Macbeth*."

In the mean time the quarrel between the rivals was daily assuming greater proportions, and others were soon involved in it. Macklin accused Reddish and Sparks, two members of the company, of hissing him from the gallery; then followed summonses before magistrates, affidavits published in the newspapers, which were full of squibs and paragraphs. He made speeches from the stage, and acted with such violence in the matter that the public took up the cudgels against him and resolved to drive him from the stage. The night fixed upon for this enterprise was that on which he was to appear in his great part of *Shylock*.

The house was crowded to the ceiling, and when the curtain drew up there was a cry for Colman to appear; Bensley, one of the actors, came forward, but the audience would not listen to him. As Macklin, dressed for *Shylock*, advanced from the side-scenes, and humbly supplicated to be heard, the riot became so furious that he was obliged to retire. After this he came on in his own clothes, but they would not allow him to speak—the cry was still for Colman. Macklin was on and off every two minutes; and when he was told that it was the desire of the audience he should never play there again, he treated it with so much contempt that they declared they would tear up the benches if the manager did not come forward. Then Bensley appeared carrying a board, on which was chalked, "At the command

of the public, Mr. Macklin is discharged." This was greeted with a roar of applause. But the attempt to substitute "She Stoops to Conquer" for the play announced brought forth more cries for Colman, who was at length compelled to appear to save his theatre from being wrecked. He asked the audience if it was their pleasure that Mr. Macklin should be discharged. There was a tremendous shout of "Yes!" "Then he is discharged," said Colman. They would accept of no entertainments proposed, and at length the money taken at the doors was returned, and the proceedings of the evening were brought to a close.

Such was the irrepressible power wielded by the audience in the palmy days of the drama, and such was the intense interest they took in all things theatrical. But Macklin must have rendered himself very obnoxious both on and off the stage to have brought such an uncompromising combination against him. We can very well understand it, however, after reading Holcroft's description of his character; which, if drawn with a harsh pencil, is no doubt strikingly accurate.

"Macklin's body," he says, "like his mind, was cast in a mould as rough as it was durable; his aspect and address confounded his inferiors; and the delight he took in making others fear and admire him gave him an aversion from the society of those whose knowledge exceeded his own. Nor was he ever heard to allow superiority in any man. He had no respect for the modesty of youth or sex, but would say the most discouraging as well as the grossest things; and felt pleasure in proportion to the pain he gave. It was common for him to ask his pupils why they did not rather think of becoming bricklayers than players. He was impatient of contradiction to an extreme; and, when he found fault, if the person attempted to answer,

he stopped him without hearing him by saying, ‘Ha! you have always a reason for being in the wrong!’ This impatience carried him still further—it often rendered him exceedingly abusive; blockhead, fool, scoundrel, were familiar expressions with him. His passions were so irritable that the least opposition was construed into an unpardonable insult—and the want of immediate apprehension in his pupils subjected them to the most galling contempt. His judgment, however, was in general sound, and his instructions those of a master.”

As a set-off, however, against these harsher features of his character, he was a man of the strictest integrity, and, whatever might be his circumstances, discharged every obligation with the utmost punctuality; and there are many stories told of his benevolence and generosity, which redound greatly to his honor.

But to return to the riots. Macklin plunged with all his love of litigation, heart and soul, into a lawsuit, and brought a charge of conspiracy against Smith, Reddish, Sparks, and several non-professional gentlemen who had aided and abetted them. The trial lasted some time, and judgment was delivered by Lord Mansfield in favor of Macklin, who, however, having gained his point, manifested no vindictiveness toward the offenders, and let them off under the curious stipulation that in addition to paying his law expenses they should take three hundred pounds’ worth of tickets—one hundred for his daughter’s benefit, another for his own, and a third for the manager’s.

His banishment from the London stage lasted nearly three years, which he passed playing in the provinces, in Ireland, and in Scotland. He reappeared for Miss Macklin’s benefit in 1775 as Shylock, and Sir Archy McSarcasm in “Love à la Mode;” and afterward as

Richard (at last!). But he now commenced an action against the managers of Covent Garden for the breach of engagement caused by his sudden dismissal, and claimed all arrears of salary from that time.

The suit was continued several years, and believing he understood every matter better than any one else, he undertook himself to answer all his bills in Chancery. On these occasions he gave notice to his family to have a fire kept up in his study, and that he was not to be interrupted, on any account whatever, till he chose to be visible. When he commenced business he locked himself up in this room, where his food and everything he required was brought, but in dumb show, no person being permitted to speak to him. Here also he slept, and whenever a thought struck him in the night he was up at his desk, writing. This suit also ended in a victory for him; which he used with even greater generosity than his previous one, for upon the damages—five hundred pounds—being paid over, he handed the sum back to Mr. Harris, one of the managers, saying he was quite content with having established his legal rights, and that he trusted there would be no more ill-blood between them.

When he was about eighty-five he conceived the extraordinary whim of turning farmer, and actually used his best endeavors to procure a farm of three or four hundred acres in the neighborhood of Cork. "I have read books on agriculture," he remarked to a friend, "and know the theory of farming better than half the bailiffs in England. I would act in Dublin in the winter, make engagements in England for the spring, be on my farm in the summer, and appear occasionally in Cork." Luckily for himself he could not obtain a farm, and so

the project, like so many others, fell through. Verily he must have thought he was going to rival the longevity of the patriarchs. And not without cause, for at nearly ninety he was as vigorous and full of spirits as ever, could sing a good song, tell a good story, and take his bottle better than half the young men he associated with. He used in company to give some extraordinary illustrations of his great age. "Oh lord, sir!" he said one evening to a party who were questioning him upon his reminiscences, "I remember so many changes in human affairs that in some families I have almost lost the power of tracing their descent. An odd circumstance happened to me a few years ago upon this subject. A party of Irish gentlemen, who had come over here in the parliamentary vacation, asked me to sup with them. I did so, sir, and we all got very jolly together, insomuch that one of them was so drunk that I made a point of taking him on my back and carrying him down-stairs to his chair. The next day the gentleman waited on me, and expressing his civilities, said he was sorry I should take so much unnecessary trouble. Here, sir, I stopped him short by telling him that one reason I had for carrying him on my back was that I carried either his father or his grandfather the same way, fifty years ago, when he was a student at the Middle Temple. 'Very true, sir,' he answered: 'I remember my father often telling it as a family story; but you are mistaken a little in point of genealogy; it was my *great-grandfather* that you did that kindness for.'"

In 1781 he returned to England for the purpose of producing his "True Born Scotchman," which had never yet been played out of Ireland, and which he had long since elaborated into a five-act comedy. The manuscript

had lain in the Lord Chamberlain's office nearly ten years, and Macklin despaired of having it returned to him, when one day, dining with Sir Fletcher Norton and Mr. Dunning, he begged their opinions as to what a man should do to recover property when he knew by whom it was detained. They advised an action of trover. "Well," said Macklin, "the case is my own. Will you two undertake my cause?" They agreed. He explained the case, and by personal application they got back the play, but with a refusal to license it under its then title, it being considered as a reflection upon the Scottish nation. Upon which Macklin changed the title to "The Man of the World." The comedy was highly successful, and Macklin's performance of Sir Pertinax was a masterpiece, being peculiarly suited to his style. When he first appeared in this character in England he was over ninety years old.

It was not until 1785 that he finally gave over his wandering life and settled down permanently in London. But even then he arranged to act occasionally at Covent Garden. His first wife was dead, and he had married again; his daughter was dead, so was his son, yet still he remained green and vigorous. In 1788 his memory began to fail him for the first time. Yet he still acted.

His last appearance upon the stage was on May 7, 1789, in the character of Shylock, and for his own benefit. The manager from the first feared a collapse, yet knowing the old man's necessities did not like to prohibit his appearance; as a precaution, however, he had another actor, Ryder, ready dressed for the part. When Macklin entered the green-room, attired with all his usual neatness and precision, he gazed about until his eyes fell upon Mrs. Pope. "My dear, are you to play to-night?"

he asked. "To be sure I am, sir. Don't you see I am dressed for Portia?" "True, but who is to play Shylock?" he inquired with a vacant look. "Why, you, to be sure," she answered. Then he recollected himself, and, putting his hand to his forehead, exclaimed pathetically: "God help me, I'm afraid my memory has left me!" He went on the stage, however, and delivered the first two or three speeches of Shylock, but in such a manner that it was evident he did not understand what he was saying. After a while he recovered a little and seemed to make an effort to rouse himself; but in vain —there was a pause—then he came forward and addressed the audience, telling them he found himself unable to proceed, and hoped they would accept his substitute.

Such was Charles Macklin's farewell to the stage he had so long adorned at the amazing age of ninety-nine years. He still continued the tenor of his life without much change, his walks, his visits to the clubs and theatres. He was very poor in his old age, and his two best comedies, "Love à La Mode," and "The Man of the World," were published by subscription to assist him. His dedication to Lord Camden, long and lucid, showed little sign of a failing brain. He lived till 1797, reaching the age of one hundred and eight, and was buried in St. Paul's churchyard, the resting-place of many another distinguished actor.

CHAPTER V.

“PEG” WOFFINGTON AND GEORGE ANNE BELLAMY.

Two Rival Queens of the Stage.—Woffington's Childhood and Brilliant Rise.—Her Amour with “Davy” Garrick.—The Culmination of her Star in London.—The Dramatic Setting of her Stage-Life.—Bellamy's Introduction to Rich.—She becomes a Great Star.—Her Romantic Career.—Her Last Appearance before an Audience.

“FRAILTY, thy name is woman!” would be an appropriate motto for this article. How many of you straight-laced ladies who so savagely condemn the actress, without recommendation to mercy, would pass scathless through the ordeal to which she is subjected, the temptations by which she is surrounded? To be homely in mind and face, without beauty or wit, to be born and reared and coddled in all the respectabilities and conventionalities, to be watched so carefully that you could never find the opportunity of going astray, even if you desired it, to never attract the attention of any man who was not the very opposite of a Lothario—in short, who was not as dull and as ordinary as yourself—and to develop into an immaculate matron, is not such a marvelous matter to congratulate yourself upon. But to be born altogether out of the orthodoxies, left to your own wild will; to be poor and beautiful and brilliant, to see the noblest and handsomest men in the land sighing at your feet, begging your acceptance of silks and satins and diamonds, doing homage to your talents as well as to your face; to be warm, impulsive, passionate by nature; and then to come out of the fire scathless, as many an actress has done and will do—well, then, madam, you have earned the right to toss your head and curl your lip, and look down upon

one who has not been blessed with your power of resistance.

It was said of her whose name heads this chapter: "Forgive her one female error, and it might fairly be said of her that she was adorned with every virtue; honor, truth, benevolence, charity were her distinguishing qualities." Such might have been written of many another actress upon whom untempted Prudery, who can boast no other virtue, looks down with scorn. "Truth, honor, benevolence, charity"—surely they ought to weigh something against the one female error. Poor Margaret must indeed have been a veritable angel—or a petrifaction—if she had been one of the un-scathed ones. Her origin was of the meanest. She was born in Dublin in 1718; her father, a poor bricklayer, died when she was only a few years old; her mother took in washing as the only means of supporting her two little girls. "I have met with more than one in Dublin," says Lee Lewes in his *Memoirs*, "who assured me that they remembered the lovely Peggy, with a little dish upon her hand and without shoes to cover her delicate feet, crying through College Green and Dame Street, 'All this fine young salad for a halfpenny, all for a halfpenny, here.'"

The wit, beauty, and grace of the little girl made her a favorite with the college students, but these were not alone in detecting Margaret's attractions. Madame Violante, who had a rope-dancer's booth in George's Lane, observed her, and persuaded her mother to let her go as an apprentice. The little Woffington soon appeared in a children's performance of "The Beggar's Opera," as Polly, and though only twelve years old was so enchanting, both in singing and acting, as to soon become

the talk of the town, and drew immense throngs to the little booth. Elrington, the manager of the Theatre Royal, finally engaged her, and at thirteen she appeared as Polly Peachum on the legitimate boards. The little street waif soon became transformed into the beautiful, elegantly-dressed, bewitching actress, who turned all the male heads in Dublin. Here she played the round of leading tragic and comic characters with ever-growing popularity till she was twenty-two. Being desirous of a greater field, she went to London, and sought an interview with Rich, the Covent Garden manager. After some trouble she succeeded, and Rich engaged her at nine pounds a week.

She made her *début* at Covent Garden in the October of 1740, as Sylvia in "The Recruiting Officer," and a little later in that part with which her name is inextricably associated, Sir Harry Wildair, in Farquhar's "Constant Couple." In this she took the town by storm. The author had said that the part had died with Wilks; it was a pity he did not live to see its glorious resurrection in Woffington. Such fire, such dash, such deviltry, some people could not believe it was a woman. One young lady fell in love with her, and sent her a proposal for marriage. Night after night all London rushed to applaud and to worship.

It was at this time that Garrick was dangling about the side-scenes of the patent theatres, dying to act, and eagerly seeking the acquaintance of every actor and actress of celebrity. Enraptured with lovely Peggy, he was quickly added to the list of her adorers, but was distinguished from all others, perhaps, in that his addresses were honorable.

And he did not plead in vain. In the first year of his

engagement at Drury Lane, he and Woffington kept house together in Bow Street. But, as we have seen in a previous chapter, the lady was too lavish in her habits to please her careful lover. Such a venial fault, however, might have been pardoned, had there not been the graver one of infidelity behind. But all the rakes, wits, and fine gentlemen of the town were besieging the weak fortress. At length one morning, at breakfast, Garrick told her it would be better for both that they should part. "I have been wearing the shirt of Deianira," he said. "Then throw it off at once," retorted the lady, in that shrill, harsh voice which was her great defect. "From this moment I have done with you." She returned all his presents, and required him to make a like restitution. He, however, kept back a pair of diamond shoe-buckles as a souvenir—his enemies said on account of their value—and wrote another copy of verses to her, in quite a different strain to previous effusions :

"I know your sophistry, I know your art,
Which all your dupes and fools controul ;
Yourself you give without your heart,
All may share that, but not your soul," etc.

It has been said that Garrick seriously entertained an idea of reforming this fair frailty and marrying her ; indeed, that he had gone so far as to buy the ring and try it on. It was, perhaps, fortunate for both parties the amour ended as it did.

After her great London success, Woffington returned to Dublin, where she was received with all the old enthusiasm. Connected with the theatre was a Beefsteak Club, which, like its English namesake, was composed of some of the most distinguished personages of the capital.

Ladies, of course, were not admitted; but the rule was now broken in favor of the bewitching Peggy, who was unanimously elected president for the season. It may be safely averred that the Beefsteaks had never had so delightful a chairman—that such wit, and mirth, and sparkling retort had never circulated their table before. But it must not be supposed that it was only by rakes and fine gentlemen her society was relished. The poor little Irish street girl had cultivated her natural abilities by reading and accomplishments, and men of the most eminent learning and of the gravest habits sought her conversation, and were charmed by it.

But all the adulation by which she was surrounded never turned Margaret Woffington's head; her love of pleasure never made her forgetful of her duties to the public as an actress. She, unlike too many other spoiled darlings, never wantonly disappointed her audience, and would rise from a sick-bed to keep faith with them. Her good-nature was frequently made the victim of others' caprices; and when Quin and Barry, or Mrs. Cibber, took a fit of jealous sulks, and pleaded indisposition, Woffington was invariably called upon to come to the rescue of the manager in one of her popular parts. At length she grew tired of being made a stop-gap, and declared she would no longer respond to these sudden announcements; and she kept her word. One night Mrs. Cibber declined to act on the old plea; Woffington was announced, and refused to appear. The next night the audience greeted her with a shower of hisses. Darting lightning upon them from her magnificent eyes she retired, and was only after great persuasion induced to go on again. Calmly advancing to the front, but with a look of defiant scorn, she said that she was quite willing to perform her

part, but “which is it to be—on or off? It is for you to decide; to me it is a perfect matter of indifference.” This bold speech had the desired effect. “On, on,” was the reply, accompanied by a tremendous round of applause.

“Her chief merits in acting, I think,” says Davies, in his life of Garrick, “consisted in her representation of females of high rank, and of dignified elegance, whose grace in deportment, as well as foibles, she understood and played in a very pleasing manner.” She paid a visit to Paris to study French acting, more especially that of Dumesnil, who held a position analogous to her own. The parts of high comedy, such as *Sylvia*, *Lady Townley*, *Lady Betty Modish*, *Sir Harry Wildair*, were her great successes; but she was also excellent as *Jane Shore*, *Hermione*, *Isabella*, *Monimia*; in tragedy, however, her bad voice was much against her. Her fine figure and dashing style, which so admirably fitted her for what are technically called “the breeches parts,” once induced her to essay *Lothario* in “*The Fair Penitent*,” but the tragedy rake did not suit her so well as the comedy.

Her family shared in her prosperity, and old Mrs. Woffington was to be seen about Dublin in her velvet cloak, diamond ring, and with her agate snuff-box in her hand, expatiating upon her *Peggy*’s greatness and goodness. Her younger sister, *Polly*, she had sent to France to be educated; and a very charming and accomplished young lady she grew up, little inferior to her famous sister; she captivated the nephew of Lord Cholmondeley, and he married her. My lord was terribly disgusted at first, but, upon being introduced to *Margaret*, he told that siren that *she* had reconciled him to the match.

“My lord,” she answered coldly, and not at all

dazzled by the compliment, “I have much more reason to be offended with it than you, for before I had but one beggar to maintain, now I have two.”

The children of this pair married into the families of Townshend and Bellingham, who are thus, like so many other noble houses, connected by blood-ties with a celebrated actress.

Her career was but a short one, and its end was a sad contrast to its early brilliancy. Before she was forty her health began to fail; the final break-up was strangely dramatic. It must be described in the words of an eye-witness, Tate Wilkinson :

“Monday, May 17, 1757,” he says, “‘As you Like It’ was acted at Covent Garden. I was standing near the wing as Mrs. Woffington in Rosalind, and Mrs. Vincent in Celia, were going on the stage in the first act. Mrs. Woffington said, ironically, she was glad to have that opportunity of congratulating me upon my stage success, and did not doubt such merits would insure me an engagement the following winter. I bowed, but made her no answer. She went through Rosalind for four acts without my perceiving she was in the least disordered, but in the fifth she complained of great indisposition. I offered her my arm, the which she graciously accepted. I thought she looked softened in her behavior and had less of the hauteur. When she came off at the quick change of dress she again complained of being ill; but she got accoutred and returned to finish the part. When in the epilogue she arrived at ‘If I were among you I would kiss as many as had beards that pleased me,’ her voice broke, she faltered, endeavored to groan, but could not; then in a voice of tremor screamed, ‘Oh God! oh God!’ tottered to the stage door speechless,

where she was caught. The audience of course applauded until she was out of sight, and then sank into awful looks of astonishment, both young and old, before and behind the curtain, to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favorite principal actress, and who had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of death, in such a situation of time and place, and in her prime of life, being then about forty-four. She was given over that night, and for several days, yet so far recovered as to linger till near the year 1760, but existed as a mere skeleton, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Looking upon her portrait for the first time is a surprise; it is so different to what our preconceived notions are likely to be. The beautiful face is pale, demure, placid, and even cold in expression; the hair is unpowdered and drawn behind the ears with a little cap, similar to that now worn by servant maids, set on the back of the head.

Pass we on now to a rival of Woffington's, who disputed her empire alike on the stage and in the number of her worshipers. George Anne Bellamy was the illegitimate daughter of Lord Tyrawley by the wife of Captain Bellamy, and was born in 1731, and her story rivals that of "Perdita" in interest and romance. Educated by her father, he finally threw her off for refusing to desert her mother. Through Mrs. Bellamy, who had formerly acted, the daughter made the acquaintance of manager Rich. The old manager accidentally overheard her, while in company with his daughters, deliver some speeches from "Othello," and was so struck by her powers that he proposed she should turn her attention to the stage. She was then just fourteen, very beautiful,

graceful, and fascinating. After one or two private performances, in which Garrick took part, she was announced to appear upon the Covent Garden stage as Monimia, in the "Orphan." Quin was indignant at this mere child being cast for such a part. "It will not do, sir," growled the burly tyrant; and, as Quin ruled the theatre, manager, and all, it was considered that the fiat had gone forth; but, to everybody's surprise, Rich answered, "But it shall do, sir." None of the three principal gentlemen would appear at the rehearsal, but the manager, to console her for these snubs, bought her a magnificent dress to appear in. Quin and his followers prophesied dead failure; but Rich, who had the most profound belief in his *protégée*, had spread about such extraordinary praises of her ability, and thereby so raised public curiosity, that on the night of her *début* the house was crammed with a most brilliant audience. In the first scene her confusion was so great that the curtain had to be dropped until she recovered. When she next appeared, nervousness rendered her voice inaudible. Quin was exultant; Rich was in despair, imploring her to rouse herself, and inciting his friends to encourage her by repeated applause. But it was not until the fourth act that she could shake off this paralysis of timidity. "Suddenly," she says, "to the astonishment of the audience, the surprise of the performers, and the exultation of the manager, I felt myself suddenly inspired. I blazed out at once with meridian splendor, and I acquitted myself throughout the whole arduous part of the character, in which even many veterans have failed, with the greatest *éclat*." Quin changed from scorn to rapture. "Thou art a divine creature, and the true spirit is in thee!" he cried,

lifting her off her feet in his transport. He was a friend and protector to her ever after.

That one night made her famous; she became the fashion. Ladies of quality patronized and petted her. Among her patrons was the celebrated and eccentric Duchess of Queensberry. She tells a capital story of her first introduction to her Grace. A few days before her benefit, Miss Bellamy received a summons to present herself at Queensberry House by twelve o'clock next day. Arraying herself in her best, and hiring a chair, she arrived there at the appointed time; but what was her mortification when, after taking up her name, the domestic returned to say that her Grace knew no such person! This, however, was much exceeded by her astonishment when she was informed that same evening that nearly every box in the house had been secured by the duchess, and a note was given her from that lady, again requesting a visit next morning. This time, dreading a second mortification, she dressed very plainly, and walked. She was, however, at once ushered into her Grace's presence. "Well, young woman," was her salutation, "what business had you in a chair yesterday? It was a fine morning, and you ought to have walked. You look as you ought to do now. Nothing is so vulgar as wearing silk in the morning. Simplicity best becomes youth, and you do not stand in need of ornaments; therefore always dress plain, except when you are upon the stage." While she talked, she was cleaning a picture. Her visitor begged to be allowed to assist her. "Don't you think I've domestics enough, if I didn't choose to do it myself?" was the sharp rejoinder. Then she drew a canvas bag out of her cabinet, and said, "There are two hundred and fifty guineas, and twenty for the duke's

tickets and mine; but I must give you something for Tyrawley's sake." "She then took a bill from her pocket-book, which having put into my hands, she told me her coach was ordered to carry me home, lest any accident should happen to me, now I had such a charge about me."

It need scarcely be said that she was importuned by all the noble *roués* about town. But she tells us that she would not listen to any proposals "but marriage and a coach." Among the most urgent of her suitors was Lord Byron, who, finding her deaf to all entreaties, resolved to resort to force. One Sunday evening a messenger came to her lodgings in Southampton Street to say that a young lady friend was waiting for her in a coach at the end of the street. Not staying to put on hat or gloves, she ran to the coach, where she was seized, lifted in, and found herself beside a friend of my lord's; he said that no harm was intended her if she would consent to make Lord Byron happy, that he was about to be married to a young lady of a large fortune, which would enable him to make a handsome provision for her. All this time the horses were galloping at full speed, until they stopped before a house at the corner of North Audley Street, about which, at this period, all was open country. The abductor, who was an earl, carried her into the house, which was his own, and then went away to prepare, as he said, a lodging he had engaged for her in Carnaby Market. Now follows an extraordinary incident, which reads like a chapter out of an old novel. She had a half-brother, who had been abroad for years, and whose return was hourly expected; it so happened that he turned the corner of the street where she was lodging just as the coach was driving off. He had seen

a young lady forced into it, but without recognizing her. He ran to the rescue, but the horses soon outstripped him. On reaching the lodgings, and inquiring for his sister, he found everybody in a state of distraction. "Oh! fly, fly to her relief!" cried one; "she has been run off with by Lord —." He at once proceeded to that nobleman's residence, and not finding him at home, walked up and down before the door, determined not to go away without seeing him. So that when my lord returned he found himself confronted by a personage whom he little expected, and who insisted upon being conducted to Miss Bellamy's presence. There was no evading the request, and the young lady's surprise and delight may be imagined when she saw the earl enter the room thus accompanied. But her pleasure was short-lived; believing her to be a willing party to the elopement, he repulsed her so violently that she fell to the ground in a swoon. When consciousness returned, she was told there had been a dreadful scene; her brother had inflicted manual chastisement upon the earl, and then left the house, vowing he would never look upon her face again. He at once started for Portsmouth, and so left her to her fate. Upon being taken to the lodging prepared for her she discovered the mistress of the house to be a mantua-maker, who worked for her, and to whom she told her story. "My appearance, as well as my eyes, which were much swelled with crying, was an undeniable testimony of the truth of my assertions." Her mother, who had now turned religious, proved as unbelieving and inexorable as her son, and the poor girl fell into a dangerous fever. We next hear of her residing with some Quaker relations in Essex, of a reconciliation with her mother, then of her engaging

with Sheridan for Dublin, where she was very well received by Miss O'Hara, Lord Tyrawley's sister, who introduced her to all her fashionable friends as her niece. Her beauty, youth, and talents, together with the patronage of these noble personages, especially that of the Honorable Mrs. Butler, a lady of great consequence in the society of the Irish capital, at once secured her success.

The adulation and applause that everywhere greeted her, both before and behind the scenes, turned my young lady's head ; and when Garrick, who was starring at the time in Dublin, refused to let her play Constance with him in "King John," on account of her youth, she was so indignant that she prevailed upon her patroness to inflict upon the great actor an unexpected humiliation. Mrs. Butler gave large balls and parties, and possessed such influence in society that she had only to send round and request her friends not to visit the theatre that evening, for Garrick, who had been playing to crowded houses, to perform to empty benches.

The next time "King John" was represented, Miss Bellamy appeared as Constance, and more people were turned away than would have filled the house twice over. But not even this triumph could heal the wounded vanity of this miss in her teens ; and when Garrick fixed upon "Jane Shore" for his benefit, and solicited her to play the heroine, she absolutely refused, sarcastically alleging the objection he had offered against her playing Constance—her youth. David, always prudent where his interests were concerned, instead of resenting the affront, further flattered my young lady's vanity by writing her an entreating note, in which he promised that if she would oblige him, he would write her "a

goody-goody epilogue; which, with the help of your eyes, shall do more mischief than ever the flesh or the devil has done since the world began.” He directed this note “To my Soul’s Idol, the Beautified Ophelia,” and gave it to his servant to deliver. The fellow, instead of doing so, handed it over to a porter in the street, without glancing at the address, which, he supposed, was the same as had been orally given him. The porter, upon reading the superscription, scratched his head. He knew the name of every person of quality in the city, but no one entitled “My Soul’s Idol, or the Beautified Ophelia.” Thinking it was a joke, he passed the letter over to a newsman, who thereupon inserted it in one of the newspapers, to the intense amusement of the public.

But Garrick’s humiliation and her own were amply avenged by Mrs. Furnival, the actress who had been dispossessed of the part of Constance by my young madam’s arrogance. Miss Bellamy was to play Cleopatra, and Sheridan, the manager, had bought for her a very magnificent dress worn by the Princess of Wales upon her birthday, not very appropriate, perhaps, to the Egyptian queen, but they were not archaeological in those days. To add to its splendor Mrs. Butler had lent her a number of diamonds. On the day of performance, the dress was left in the dressing-room by her maid, while she went on some errand. Mrs. Furnival, who was to play Octavia, happening to pass by, caught sight of the splendid raiment, and, without a moment’s hesitation, entered, carried it off to her own tiring-room, and proceeded to adapt it to her own figure. Great was the consternation of the careless servant upon her return to find the dress, with all the diamonds, gone; being told it was in Mrs. Furnival’s possession, she ran like a mad woman to her

room, and demanded its return. It was coolly refused. Upon which, hot with rage, she fell tooth and nail upon the spoiler, whose screams speedily brought assistance. But the spoil was retained, and when Miss Bellamy requested her to restore the jewels, the reply was, that she should have them after the play. Nor could threats or entreaties move her. And Octavia marched on a blaze of silver tissue and diamonds, while Cleopatra had to put up with the plain, dingy dress which had been intended for Antony's wife. Only a woman could have conceived such an exquisite revenge, or have had the effrontery to have carried it out.

The memoirs of Miss Bellamy, which she left behind, present some strange pictures of the Dublin audience of that age. One night, as she was passing on to the stage, an officer, who was standing at the wings, stooped and kissed her on the neck. She turned and slapped his face in sight of the whole audience, among whom was Lord Chesterfield, then Lord Lieutenant, who rose from his seat and applauded the act. In consequence of this, Sheridan published a notice in all the papers that henceforth no gentlemen would be admitted behind the scenes, and to enforce the notice he had a sentry placed at the stage door. One night a drunken officer, being refused admission, stabbed the soldier in the thigh with so much violence that the sword broke in the wound. Another night, a Mr. Kelly mounted over the spikes which guarded the pit from the stage, coolly made his way behind the scenes into the green-room, and grossly insulted one of the actresses. Miss Bellamy entering at the time, and seeing the lady in tears, and the fellow holding her down in her chair, she asked her why she did not force herself away from him. Upon which the brute turned

savagely upon the young girl, pursued her to her dressing-room, and tried to break in the door, swearing the direst vengeance upon her. The manager came up and desired him to quit the theatre: he refused, and was summarily ejected. Returning to the pit he threw an apple at Sheridan, who was performing *Æsop*, and it struck him upon the forehead with such force as to dent the iron of the false nose into the flesh. The actor addressed the audience, but they were too ruffianly to take his part, so the curtain was dropped, and the play left unfinished. Kelly had the impudence to rush round to his dressing-room and demand satisfaction. And he got it, but not in the way he desired—with a thick oaken cudgel, with which Sheridan belabored him, until he howled again, and could scarcely crawl. Off he went to a coffee-house to relate his wrongs to his friends, and call upon them to assist him in his vengeance. But when they arrived at the theatre it was shut, and so well defended that the ruffians thought it best to retire. The next night “The Fair Penitent” was to be performed. The moment Sheridan appeared as Horatio, these scoundrels, who had planted themselves in the pit, jumped from their seats, and, drawing their swords, yelled, “Out with the ladies, and down with the house!” Sheridan was obliged to fly for his life, while they destroyed his property, smashed in every door, and stabbed and thrust into every place in which they supposed he might be hidden. Such terror did these riots inspire, that the magistrates ordered the theatre to be closed for a time. The college students, annoyed at being deprived of their favorite amusement, took the side of the manager, invited some of the ringleaders to breakfast, and, as soon as these were within the precincts of the college,

dragged them to the pumps, and pumped upon them until they were nearly drowned.

Upon her return to England she again met her father, and a reconciliation took place. Unfortunately, however, he selected a husband for her of whom she did not approve, and, finding him peremptory, she eloped one night from the theatre in the middle of the performance, in her stage dress, with a Mr. Metham, the man of her heart, who promised to marry her. But she soon discovered she had been duped, and that, on account of certain legal settlements, he could not make her his wife during his father's life. After a few months' absence she returned to the stage, to be again the great attraction, and to be still received in the society of ladies of rank and reputation. She continued to live with Metham for some time, but finding little chance of his fulfilling his promise, she listened to the addresses of a gentleman named Calcraft, an army contractor, who made the curious proposal of signing a bond to make her his wife within six or seven years, on the forfeiture of fifty thousand pounds. The excuse he alleged for the delay was his dependence upon Mr. Fox, who forbade such a union—but that within the specified time he should be able to realize sufficient to be independent of him. After much and long persuasion she consented. "The contract was immediately executed; and, except the omission of the ceremony, our nuptials were celebrated to the satisfaction of all parties, *but my poor self.*" By-and-by she discovered that the man was already married, and therefore could not keep his engagement. She published a statement, with an appeal to the public, and there was a great scandal. From this time her course was a downward one, over which it is best to draw a veil.

She and Woffington were rivals and deadly foes. Peggy, whatever might be her errors, was a thoroughly trained actress, with a real devotion to her art, in which she worked hard. George Anne, although possessed of undoubted abilities, was never much more than a clever amateur ; she had begun too high on the ladder ; she had thought more of her dress, of her looks, than of her acting ; she exercised her profession capriciously, and her heart was never in it, except in so far as it ministered to her vanity and extravagance ; therefore, there is little doubt that Woffington had something of scorn in her jealousy. Poor old Rich must have ever been in hot water with their perpetual bickering and quarreling. He had revived Lee's "Alexander the Great" for Barry, and the two ladies were, very appropriately, to appear as "The Rival Queens." Bellamy sent to Paris for the two most splendid dresses that could be bought. Rich purchased for Woffington a suit which had belonged to the Princess Dowager of Wales ; it was quite new, looked beautiful by day, but being of a pale straw color faded into a dirty white by candle-light. And, whether accidentally or purposely, Bellamy had chosen a bright yellow, over which she wore a purple robe. The contrast was terrible. "Thus accoutred in all my magnificence," writes the autobiographer, "I made my *entrée* into the green-room as the Persian princess. But how shall I describe the feelings of my inveterate rival? The sight of my pompous attire created more real envy in the heart of the actress than it was possible the real Roxana could feel for the loss of the Macedonian hero. As soon as she saw me, almost bursting with rage, she drew herself up, and then, with a haughty air, addressed me : 'I desire, madam, you will never more, upon any account, wear those clothes in

the piece we perform to-night.' I replied: 'I know not, madam, by what right you take upon yourself to dictate to me what I shall wear. And I assure you, madam, you must ask it in a very different manner before you obtain my compliance.' She found it necessary to solicit in a softer strain, and I readily gave my assent." But only to increase the other's mortification. "The next night I sported my other suit, which was more splendid than the former. This kindled Mrs. Woffington's rage so that it nearly bordered on madness. When—oh! dire to tell—she drove me off the carpet, and gave me the *coup de grâce* almost behind the scenes. The audience, who I believe preferred hearing my last dying speech to seeing her beauty and fine attitudes, could not avoid perceiving her violence, and testified their displeasure." The night after, the yellow and purple was again donned, and Woffington, all in a fury, demanded "how I dared to dress again in the manner that she had so strictly prohibited?" Rich was sent for and wisely declined to come. Upon which there were mutual reriminations. Roxana thrust home when she said it was well for her that she had a minister to supply her extravagance with jewels and such paraphernalia. To which Statira retorted that she was sorry that even half the town could not furnish a supply equal to the minister she so illiberally hinted at. Upon which Woffington's fury was so great that her rival took to her heels and fled, "frighted at the sound herself had made," but was even then only saved from a terrible mauling by the interposition of the Comte de Haslang, who was in the green-room at the time. Such adventures may seem very shocking to the overstrained refinement of the present day; but such behavior was not confined to actresses, being frequently indulged in by ladies

of quality. Foote, getting hold of the quarrel, produced a piece entitled "The Green-room Squabble; or a Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius."

In her best days, Miss Bellamy disputed the empire of the stage not only with Woffington, but with Mrs. Cibber herself. In the delineation of all-absorbing passionate love she had no equal. Her Juliet was perfection. Of her Belvidera a fine judge said: "I came to admire Garrick; I go away enchanted with Bellamy." Her surpassing beauty, her soft, blue eyes, her exquisite fairness, rendered her a very goddess of love; while in brilliancy of wit and powers of conversation she was even Woffington's rival. Wealth was poured upon her in a Danaë shower, and scattered as recklessly as it was showered; but not all wasted, for her charities were munificent. She gave one thousand pounds toward better clothing our soldiers in the war, and as she passed through the park every sentinel saluted her.

But she could not long escape the consequences of such a life. Giving herself up to pleasure, she began to neglect her profession, and became so careless and capricious that the public would no longer tolerate her; managers would not engage her, and Colman offered her six pounds a week. At length, in 1760, Mossop, one of the Dublin managers, in remembrance of the former rage she had created in that city, offered her a thousand pounds for the season. Years had elapsed since that memorable first visit; the remembrance of her beauty and talent was still fresh in the minds of her old admirers, and their talk and anticipations stimulated the rising generation with an eager curiosity to behold this paragon; so that when she arrived at her lodgings she found a crowd collected

about the door to see her alight. But, alas! although only nine-and-twenty, the once enchanting loveliness was faded, and the crowd saw only "a little dirty creature, bent nearly double, enfeebled by fatigue, her countenance tinged with jaundice, and in every respect the reverse of a person who could make the least pretension to beauty." The description is her own. Tate Wilkinson describes her reception upon the stage:

"Mossop, as manager, made his first appearance in *Pierre*, in 'Venice Preserved,' Belvidera, Mrs. Bellamy, being the first night of her performing. Expectation was so great that the house filled as fast as the people could thrust in with or without paying. On speaking her first line behind the scenes—'Lead me, ye virgins, lead me to that kind voice'—it struck the ears of the audience as uncouth and unmusical; yet she was received, as was prepared and determined by all who were her or Mr. Mossop's friends, and by the public at large, with repeated plaudits on her *entrée*. But the roses were fled! The young, the once lovely Bellamy was turned haggard! and her eyes, that used to charm all hearts, appeared sunk, large, hollow, and ghastly. O Time! Time! thy glass should be often consulted; for before the first short scene had elapsed, disappointment, chagrin, and pity sat on every eye and countenance. By the end of the third act they were all (like Bobadil) planet-struck; the other two acts were hobbled through. Mossop was cut to the heart, and never played *Pierre* (one of his best parts) so indifferently as on that night. The curtain dropped, and poor Bellamy never after drew a single house there. She left Dublin without a single friend to regret her loss. And as an actress of note her name never more ranked in any théâtre, nor did she ever again rise in public estimation."

Although in the receipt of fifty guineas a week, she was arrested for debt long before the termination of her engagement. Upon her return to London this was a frequent occurrence. At length, to evade the writs, she engaged herself as housekeeper to Count Haslang, who, being an ambassador, secured to all his household immunity from arrest. Her downward course was now fast and furious; one after another went diamonds, clothes, all she possessed; then she borrowed small sums of money from every person who would lend to her, lived within the rules of the King's Bench, and was only deterred one night from casting herself off Westminster Bridge by overhearing the plaints of a creature even more miserable than herself.

In 1785 a benefit was organized for her at Covent Garden. Reynolds, the dramatist, thus describes the sad scene: "I dwell for a moment on a last appearance which I witnessed, namely, that of Mrs. Bellamy, who took her leave of the stage May 24, 1785. On this occasion Miss Farren, the present Countess of Derby, spoke an address which concluded with the following couplet:

"But see, oppressed with gratitude and tears,
To pay her dutous tribute, she appears."

The curtain then ascended; and Mrs. Bellamy being discovered, the whole house immediately arose to mark their favorable inclinations toward her, and from anxiety to obtain a view of this once celebrated actress, and, in consequence of the publication of her life, then celebrated authoress. She was seated in an arm-chair, from which she in vain attempted to rise, so completely was she subdued by her feelings. She, however, succeeded in muttering a few words expressive of her gratitude, and then, sinking into her seat, the curtain dropped before her—forever!" She died in 1788.

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN KEMBLE AND SARAH SIDDONS.

A Theatrical Family.—Mrs. Siddons's Failure at her First London *Début*.—She storms the Town in “Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage.”—John Kemble's Experiences as Actor and Marriage.—Judgment on their Merits by their Contemporaries.—Their Respective Farewells to the Stage.—Hazlitt's Recollections of the Great Brother and Sister.

FROM Ward, who was Roger Kemble's father-in-law, and an actor under Betterton, to Mrs. Scott Siddons, who still graces the stage, we have five successive generations of a family some member of which has been attached to the theatrical profession. This is an astonishing sequence, embracing as it does a period of quite two hundred years, and has probably no parallel.

Ward was a strolling manager when Roger Kemble, who united hair-dressing with acting, eloped with his daughter. The young couple started in management upon their own account, and strolled from town to town and village to village after the manner and under the difficulties and disadvantages of the time; at some places received with gracious favor, at others treated like lepers and threatened with the stocks and whipping at the cart's tail, according as the great people were liberal-minded or puritanical. Their first child, born June 13, 1755, at Brecon, was christened Sarah; their second, a boy, christened John Philip, was born at Prescot in Lancashire, in 1757. The old farm-house in which the latter event took place is, it is said, still standing. There came a Stephen in the following year; and other sons and daughters with whom we have nothing to do followed

in due succession. All these were put upon the stage as soon as they were old enough to speak a few lines; and as the years advanced Mr. Roger Kemble's company, like that of Mr. Vincent Crummles, was almost entirely included under one patronymic. At thirteen we find Sarah playing Ariel in the great room of the King's Head at Worcester, which boasted no other theatre, and four years later sustaining all the principal parts at Wolverhampton. She had now grown to be a very beautiful girl, and made great havoc among the hearts of susceptible squires, and even included an earl among the list of her adorers. But in her father's company there was a handsome young fellow from Birmingham, named Henry Siddons, whom she preferred to all her rich admirers. As Mr. and Mrs. Kemble had married against parental consent, it followed as a matter of course that they would not allow their daughter to choose for herself; besides, they had their pride and their ambition, and strongly objected to an alliance with a poor player. So Henry Siddons was told the manager's daughter was not for him. But on his benefit night he revenged himself by reciting a poem of his own composition, in which he detailed to the audience the story of his hapless love, and thereby greatly won their sympathies and a box on the ear from his inamorata's mother, who was listening at the side-scene in a very great passion.

This brought about a disturbance. Siddons left the company, and Sarah went away in a huff, and hired herself as lady's maid to Mrs. Greathead, of Guy's Cliff, Warwickshire. There she did not remain long, for Roger and his wife, finding her determined, and probably moved by the solicitations of their patrons, gave a reluctant consent to the marriage, and on the 6th of November,

1773, Sarah Kemble became Mrs. Siddons, and from that time so appeared in the playbills. Soon afterward she and her husband joined the company of Crump and Chamberlain, well-known strolling managers in their day, at Cheltenham; and there for the first time we hear of her being accredited with superior powers as an actress. As Belvidera, in Otway's "Venice Preserved," she achieved a great success, and became a *protégée* of all the fashionable play-goers, especially of the Honorable Miss Boyle, who assisted her scanty wardrobe by the loan of dresses, and helped her with her own hands to make new ones. Her fame reached London, and Garrick sent his stage manager, King, down to the Gloucestershire watering-place to take stock of her abilities. He reported very favorably, and soon afterward Parson Bates, of the *Morning Post*, pugilist, duelist, and critic, a well-known man of the day, took the same journey for a similar purpose, and brought back a warm eulogy upon her acting as Rosalind. Thereupon Roscius engaged her for Drury Lane at five pounds a week. Her first appearance was on the 29th of December, 1775.

The *début* was a failure, absolute and unmitigated, and only Mrs. Abington, one of the leading actresses in Garrick's company, discovered the hidden genius. The latter called all the rest fools in their judgment. Mrs. Siddons opened in Portia, and during the five nights preceding Garrick's departure from the stage, she appeared in Mrs. Strickland in "The Suspicious Husband," and Lady Anne to Garrick's "Richard." So her first London season ended.

"It was a stunning and cruel blow," she says, "overwhelming all my ambitions, and involving peril even to the subsistence of my helpless babes. It was very near

destroying me. My blighted prospects, indeed, produced a state of mind that preyed upon my health, and for a year and a half I was supposed to be hastening to a decline." Her next engagement was at Manchester, and thence she went to York to Tate Wilkinson. There "all lifted up their eyes in astonishment that such a voice and such a judgment should have been neglected by a London audience." In 1778 John Palmer, on the recommendation of Henderson, engaged her for Bath, then the first English theatre out of London, at three pounds a week. In her first parts, Lady Townley and Mrs. Candour—the latter appears a strange character for a young lady—she was only coldly received, and seemed to be on the threshold of new disappointments and mortifications.

But we must now go back to detail the fortunes of another member of the Kemble family. John Philip acted as a child, like all the rest of his brothers and sisters, but by-and-by his father resolved to make a priest of him. Roger was a Catholic and brought up the boys to that faith, the girls following the Protestant religion of their mother. So at ten years old the boy was sent away to Sedgely Park College, Wolverhampton. There he remained four years, and in 1771 proceeded to Douai, where he was famous as a declaimer and for a prodigious memory. He once undertook to get two books of Homer by heart, and actually repeated fifteen hundred lines. But the theatrical blood within him rebelled against the cassock and burned for the sock and buskin. So he left the college in 1775, landed at Bristol, and proceeded to Brecknock, where his parents were then performing. Bitterly disappointed in his ambition, Roger refused to receive his disobedient son; a subscription of a few shillings was raised among the company, to which the irate

father was with difficulty induced to add a guinea, and with this pittance John Philip had the world before him. He started on foot for Wolverhampton, where his sister's late managers, Crump and Chamberlain, had opened the theatre.

He did not make a favorable impression, and was evidently what, in expressive stage parlance, is called "a stick." But he was studious and painstaking, and made a progress in his art which, if not rapid, was sure. Lewis, the comedian, used to afterward relate that, while "starring" some little time after this in a country town, he was greatly struck by a young man who was playing Lovewell in "The Clandestine Marriage," who, although attired in a very ridiculous dress, was so correct and gentlemanly in his acting and bearing that such shortcomings were lost sight of. He found him to be a Mr. John Kemble, and that he was associated with a person who exhibited tricks of *legerdemain*. In 1778 his sister procured him an engagement at Liverpool; thence, in the same year, probably by the same recommendation, he joined Tate Wilkinson at York. There all the great leading parts were in possession of a veteran actor named Cummings, who played the gay Charles Surface at sixty. The audience pronounced Kemble "very good in his way, but nothing to Coombs;" and the press advised him, if he desired to attain eminence in his profession, to study that gentleman's style. It would have been considered a sacrilege for any other actor to have played the parts in which the favorite was identified. Once upon a bespeak night a servant of the patron's refused to go to the theatre because "that Kemble was playing one of Mr. Coombs's parts." An actor had much to endure from the ignorance and insolence of the

audience in those days. There was a certain influential "lady" at York who took a delight in insulting the actors upon the stage. One night, when Kemble was performing some tragic part, she disconcerted him so much by loud laughter and ridicule, that he was compelled to address her and say he could not go on until she desisted. Some officers who were in the box with her cried out she had been insulted, and demanded an apology. Kemble refused to make any. There was a great uproar, but the tragedian remained firm. The next day these gentlemen called upon the manager, and informed him that, unless the actor was dismissed, they and their friends would withdraw their patronage, and compel their tradesmen to do likewise. The manager replied spiritedly that he had always found Mr. Kemble a gentleman, that he considered he was in the right, and should not think of discharging him.

From York John Philip proceeded to Dublin. Here, again, he appears to have made little impression, for the audience still remembered Barry, and were loath to accept any one in his place. He worked indefatigably, played a round of some thirty-eight characters belonging to every range of the drama, and, although never esteemed in comedy parts, gradually won his way as a tragedian, until his performance as the Count, in Jephson's "Count of Narbonne," raised him to be an established favorite in the Irish capital.

Let us now return to his sister, whom we left at Bath struggling against her inability to play comedy. Upon her appearance in the sympathetic parts of tragedy, her success was at once assured. Four years did she remain in the western city, and during that time made many friends in the best society. Henderson acted with her,

and recommended her to Sheridan in the most enthusiastic terms, and the Duchess of Devonshire spread the fame of her talents everywhere she went. By-and-by there came an offer for one more trial at Drury Lane. But her former failure had left upon her mind so gloomy and bitter an impression that she had constantly declared she should never desire to act again in London. Telling Palmer, the manager, of her offer, she expressed her readiness to decline it, and remain with him if he would give her some little advance upon her small salary of three pounds a week. Strange to say, although she was so immense a favorite, he declined to do so. This refusal probably arose from personal feeling; Sarah Siddons was never liked behind the scenes; she was cold, exacting, and disagreeable. Her farewell benefit took place on May 12, 1782. All the pit was laid out in stalls, and a few front rows of the gallery were reserved for the frequenters of that part of the house, and for which inconvenience she entreated their indulgence with many humble apologies. The performance consisted of "The Distressed Mother" (Racine's "Andromaque"), a poetical Address, and the "Devil to Pay," in which she played Nell. The theatre was crammed, the receipts were one hundred and forty-six pounds, and the excitement was tremendous.

Even now Sheridan was only lukewarm over the engagement, and her *début* was put off until the 10th of October. She was in town a fortnight beforehand, preparing and rehearsing in a torture of apprehension, for a second failure would have meant an eternal one, and probably the diminution of her provincial position. The play selected was Southerne's tragedy, "Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage." At the rehearsals the old nervousness

again deprived her of voice, until excitement and encouragement gave her strength. Two days before the dreaded night she was seized with hoarseness which filled her with terror, but happily it passed away by the next morning.

"On the eventful day," she writes, "my father arrived to comfort me, and be a witness of my trial. He accompanied me to my dressing-room at the theatre. There he left me, and I, in one of what I call my desperate tranquillities, which usually impress me under terrific circumstances, there completed my dress, to the astonishment of my attendants, without uttering one word, though often sighing most profoundly."

Her husband had not the courage to enter the theatre, but wandered about the street or hovered about the playhouse in an agony of suspense. The house was crammed, and she was received with a hearty round of applause.

"The awful consciousness," she says, "that one is the sole object of attention to that immense space, lined as it were with human intellect from top to bottom and all around, may be imagined, but can never be described, and by me can never be forgotten."

All doubts, however, were soon at rest. Her beautiful face and form, the exquisite tones of her voice, her deep tenderness, seized upon every heart; and as the tragic story advanced, her overwhelming agony thrilled every soul as it had never been thrilled before. Men wept, women fell into hysterics, transports of applause shook the house, the excitement, the enthusiasm was almost terrible in its intensity, and the curtain fell amid such acclamations as perhaps not even Garrick had ever roused. In striking contrast to this tumultuous triumph is the home-picture that follows:

“I reached my own quiet fireside on retiring from the scene of reiterated shouts and plaudits. I was half dead, and my joy and thankfulness were of too solemn and overpowering a nature to admit of words, or even tears. My father, my husband, and myself sat down to a frugal meat supper, in a silence uninterrupted except by exclamations of gladness from Mr. Siddons. My father enjoyed his refreshments, but occasionally stopped short, and laying down his knife and fork, lifting up his venerable face, and throwing back his silver hair, gave way to tears of happiness. We soon parted for the night, and I, worn out with continually broken rest and laborious exertion, after an hour’s retrospection (who can conceive the intenseness of that reverie ?), fell into a sweet and profound sleep, which lasted to the middle of the next day.”

As may be supposed, the old queens of tragedy did not submit to dethronement without a struggle. Mrs. Crawford, the haughtiest and most indignant of all, entered the lists against her young rival at Covent Garden, and numbers of old play-goers flocked thither to renew old impressions and confirm doubtful judgments. But it was soon discovered that each represented a different school of acting; by Mrs. Crawford the level portions of the part were hurried over or given in neutral tones, and she reserved herself for sudden bursts of energy, whereas Mrs. Siddons elaborated the utmost effect, whether of elocution or feeling, out of every line. For her benefit, the elder actress announced her rival’s greatest part, Isabella; but the boxes were not taken, and she fell ill with mortification. The press, too, became hostile to the *débutante*, jealous of her too great success. But nothing could shake it, or damp the public ardor. The very lobbies were crammed with people of the first fashion. Seats in the boxes were not to be had, and ladies

hazarded their lives by struggling to gain admittance to the pit. The street in which she lodged was daily crowded with the carriages of the aristocracy; the parties to which she was invited were packed to suffocation, and people stood on the chairs and even on the tables to catch a glimpse of her. Her salary was to be five pounds a week, but before the end of the season it was raised to twenty pounds, and her first benefit realized eight hundred pounds.

It was Mrs. Siddons who first commenced that pernicious star system, which has done as much as anything to sap the very foundations of the theatrical profession; and as soon as the London season was over she scoured the provinces for fame—and money. At Dublin she was again opposed by Mrs. Crawford, who, as the wife of the supreme favorite Barry, had been enormously popular; and the Dublinites rallied around their old love, preferring her to the younger actress. Mrs. Siddons's engagement was not a success; she hated the place and the people, and her opinions oozing out were quite sufficient to render her unpopular. The press wrote her down, and ridiculed the emotion her performances excited. One of these skits is worth transcribing:

“On Saturday, Mrs. Siddons, about whom all the world has been talking, exposed her beautiful, adamantine, soft, and comely person, for the first time, in the Theatre Royal, Smock Alley. The house was crowded with hundreds more than it could hold, with thousands of admiring spectators that went away without a sight. . . . She was nature itself—she was the most exquisite work of art. . . . Several fainted, even before the curtain drew up. . . . The fiddlers in the orchestra blubbered like hungry children crying for their bread-and-butter; and when the bell rang for music between the acts, the tears ran from the bas-

soon player's eyes in such showers that they choked the finger-stops, and, making a spout of the instrument, poured in such a torrent upon the first fiddler's book that, not seeing the overture was in two sharps, the leader of the band actually played it in two flats; but the sobs and sighs of the groaning audience, and the noise of the corks drawn from the smelling-bottles, prevented the mistake being discovered. . . . The briny pond in the pit was three feet deep, and the people that were obliged to stand upon the benches were in that position up to their ankles in tears. An Act of Parliament to prevent her playing will certainly pass, for she has infected the volunteers, and they sit reading '*The Fatal Marriage*,' crying and roaring all the time. May the curses of an insulted nation pursue the gentlemen of the college, the gentlemen of the bar, and the peers and peeresses that hissed her on the second night! True it is that Mr. Garrick never could make anything of her, and pronounced her below mediocrity; true it is the London audience did not like her. But what of that?"

The Scotch capital more than recompensed her for the slights of the Irish. Yet on her first night in Edinburgh, the house, although crammed, was freezing; scene after scene the audience sat like mutes; and after one of her greatest efforts, a single voice exclaimed from the pit, in a tone of judicial calmness, "That's nae sae bad!" But on her second visit the Scotch went as mad as the Londoners. In one day twenty-five hundred and fifty-seven people applied for the six hundred and fifty seats at the disposal of the management; the doors were besieged at noon, and footmen took their stand at the box-entrance as soon as the play was over, to secure their masters' places for the following night. Even the church synod arranged its meetings according to her performances.

In 1783 she brought her brother John to London, where he appeared on the 12th of September as Hamlet. His reception in no degree approached that of his sister, and it brought forth much conflicting criticism. His new readings, which were many and strange, excited much comment. The performance was eminently graceful, calm, deeply studied—during his life he wrote out the entire part forty times!—but cold and unsympathetic. Nevertheless, it was felt that a fine artist had appeared, and with the exception of Henderson he had at the time no rival in the highest walks of tragedy.

“Old play-goers,” says Dr. Doran, “have told me of a grand delivery of the soliloquies of Hamlet, and mingled romance and philosophy in the whole character; an eloquent by-play, a sweet reverence for his father, a remembrance of the *Prince* with whatever companion he might be for the moment; of a beautiful filial affection for his mother, and of one more tender, which he could *not* conceal, for Ophelia.”

Unlike his sister, who never exceeded the greatness of her first performances, and degenerated in her later years, Kemble was a progressive actor, improving yearly until the very last. But the old theatrical law of precedence, which had hampered him with “Coomins” at York, again kept him back at Drury Lane, where the principal tragic parts were in possession of “Gentleman Smith,” the original Charles Surface, who, although an excellent light comedian, was certainly very unfit for tragedy. Nevertheless, he played Macbeth to Mrs. Siddons’s Lady Macbeth on her first appearance in that character, February 2, 1784. Let us go back to the time when, little more than a girl, she first studied the part, and listen to her own account of it:

"It was my custom to study my characters at night, when all the domestic cares and business of the day were over. On the night preceding that in which I was to appear in this part for the first time, I shut myself up as usual, when all the family were retired, and commenced my study of *Lady Macbeth*. As the character is very short, I thought I should soon accomplish it. Being then only twenty years of age, I believed, as many others do believe, that little more was necessary than to get the words into my head, for the necessity of discrimination, and the development of character, at that time of my life, had scarcely entered into my imagination. But to proceed. I went on with tolerable composure in the silence of the night (a night I never can forget), till I came to the assassination scene, when the horrors of the scene rose to a degree that made it impossible for me to get farther. I snatched up my candle and hurried out of the room in a paroxysm of terror. My dress was of silk, and the rustling of it, as I ascended the stairs to go to bed, seemed to my panic-struck fancy like the movement of a spectre pursuing me. At last I reached my chamber, where I found my husband fast asleep. I clapt my candlestick down upon the table, without the power of putting the candle out, and I threw myself on my bed, without daring to stay even to take off my clothes. At peep of day I rose to resume my task, but so little did I know of my part when I appeared in it at night that my shame and confusion cured me of procrastinating my business for the remainder of my life."

Although her performance of the part in London was an undoubted triumph, memories of Mrs. Pritchard in the same character were too fresh in the minds of old play-goers for her conception to go unchallenged. Many considered her inferior to her great predecessor. Mason, the poet, was so prejudiced that he could not endure to hear the name of Siddons mentioned in his presence. Lord Harcourt said she wanted the dignity, the compass,

and the melody of Mrs. Pritchard. Then he proceeds to contrast the different points made by the two :

“ Her countenance,” he says, “ aided by a studious and judicious choice of head-dress, was a true picture of a mind diseased in the sleeping scene, and made one shudder; and the effect, as a picture, was better than it has ever been with the taper, because it allows of variety in the actress washing her hands; but the sigh was not so horrid, nor the voice so sleepy, nor yet quite so articulate, as Pritchard’s.”

Apropos of the taper, there is a story that well depicts the theatrical feeling of the time. Mrs. Pritchard had held it in her hand throughout the scene; Mrs. Siddons determined to place it on a table as soon as she entered, that she might go through the pantomime of washing her hands, a piece of business that had never then been done. Sheridan strongly opposed the idea; it would never do, he said; the audience would not stand such an innovation; it would damn the whole performance. But she would not give in. Even at the last moment, when she was dressing for the part, and had given orders that no one was to approach her room, he insisted upon seeing her, and again expostulated upon the danger of the proposed change. When the lamp was laid down, a sensation went through the house, but the audience, spell-bound by the wonderful acting, did not heed the innovation. Such conservatism will seem ridiculous to the indifferentism of the present day, yet it indicates an artistic feeling, a jealous respect for art-tradition, to which we can now lay no claim.

There was nothing amiable or lovable in the character of the great actress, and such was the impression she seemed to make upon nearly all who came in contact

with her. Under date 1787, Fanny Burney describes in her diary her first introduction, at a party, to Mrs. Siddons in private life:

“I found her,” she says, “the heroine of a tragedy—sublime, elevated, and solemn; in face and person truly noble and commanding; in manners, quiet and stiff; in voice, deep and dragging; and in conversation, formal, sententious, calm, and dry. I expected her to have been all that is interesting; the delicacy and sweetness with which she seizes every opportunity to strike and to captivate upon the stage had persuaded me that her mind was formed with that peculiar susceptibility which, in different modes, must give equal powers to attract and to delight in common life. But I was very much mistaken. As a stranger, I must have admired her noble appearance and beautiful countenance, and have regretted that nothing in her conversation kept pace with their promise; and, as a celebrated actress, I had still only to do the same. Whether fame and success have spoiled her, or whether she only possesses the skill of representing and embellishing materials with which she is furnished by others, I know not; but still I remain disappointed.”

In this year, 1787, John Philip married Priscilla Brereton, a young widow, *née* Hopkins, who survived him many years, dying at ninety, in 1845, and could then boast herself as having been a member of Garrick’s company. The courtship was very brief and very unromantic. He had always evinced a partiality for the young lady, even before her marriage; but one night as he was coming off the stage, meeting her in the wing, he chuckled her under the chin, and, with a pleasant smile, said, “Pop, you may shortly learn something to your advantage.” “Pop,” the familiar name by which Mrs. Brereton was known among her friends, ran to her

mother, who was also an actress in the same theatre, told her what had happened, with "I wonder what he meant?" "Why, he means to make you an offer of marriage, to be sure," replied the old lady, "and you'll of course accept it." Mrs. Hopkins was right, the offer was made, accepted, the wedding quietly celebrated, and the bride and bridegroom went through their professional duties the same night as if nothing had happened.

It was in 1778 that Kemble succeeded King as stage-manager of Drury Lane, and at once began a very considerable reform in the dressing and casting of pieces. Sheridan's chronic impecuniosity had reduced the stage accessories to a condition which nowadays would scarcely be tolerated in a booth at a fair, and Kemble set to work not only to renovate them, but to introduce an appropriateness to period and locality never before attempted. Yet the first time he played Othello in London it was in the full uniform of a British general; and he continued to appear in Macbeth with a hearse-like plume in his bonnet until Walter Scott plucked it out and substituted a single eagle's feather. His new position was a bed of thorns; tradespeople refused to credit unless he himself became answerable, and sometimes Sheridan neglected to honor the debt, and once Kemble was arrested; the actors were unpaid and rebellious, and frequently refused to go on the stage until they received their night's salary; more than once even Kemble and his sister were driven to such degrading means to obtain money. One night, patience and temper now utterly exhausted, at a supper at Mrs. Crouch's, the great singer's, John Philip gave in his resignation; the words in which it was couched are highly characteristic. After much preliminary growling he burst forth: "I am

an eagle, whose wings have been bound down by frosts and snows; but now I shake my pinions and cleave into the genial air into which I am born!" But Sheridan, whose power over men was something marvelous, succeeded in again cajoling him. Not until 1802 did he finally sever his connection with Drury Lane, then recently rebuilt. In that year he bought Lewis's share in Covent Garden for twenty-three thousand pounds, borrowing half the sum on interest.

Ere he appeared there he paid a visit to Paris. He was now in the very zenith of his fame; from the time he had assumed the direction of Drury Lane he took the position of principal actor, and performed one after another that series of parts with which his name became identified—*Macbeth*, *King John*, *Wolsey*, *the Stranger*, *Rolla*, *Brutus*, *Cato*, and, greatest of all, *Coriolanus*. He had mounted Garrick's throne, and there was none to dispute the sceptre with him. During his absence his wife was the guest of the Marquis of Abercorn. In Paris he was received in the best society, dined daily with Lords Holland and Egremont, and received the homage of the great Talma.

Within six years after his becoming part manager of Covent Garden, the theatre was burned to the ground. Kemble lost all; but generous friends came to his assistance. The Duke of Northumberland pressed upon him a loan of ten thousand pounds, and on the day the foundation-stone of the new house was laid, destroyed the bond. In eight months the building was completed. But new troubles now beset him. We have no space to give any account of the "O. P." (Old Prices) riots which arose upon his raising the prices of admission to the pit and boxes, and making the addition of a tier of

private boxes, till then unknown. After bravely resisting the unparalleled tumult for a week, he was compelled to give way to popular clamor.

During these years we have been compelled to so rapidly skim over, Mrs. Siddons was still advancing in fame and fortune. She had commenced at five pounds a week, by 1804 she had advanced to twenty pounds a night, and in 1811 to fifty guineas. She had purchased a house in Gower Street, the back of which she describes as being "most effectually in the country and most delightfully pleasant." What a change in that neighborhood since those days! The limit of her ambition had once been ten thousand pounds; she had long since realized that sum more than twice over, but doubtless she would still have gone on accumulating more, had there not come warnings that her days of greatness were waning. She had grown very stout and unwieldy, and, although her age did not warrant it, so infirm, that after kneeling in a part she had to be assisted to rise. Her acting was becoming heavy, monotonous, and stagy; the tenderness, the passion of her younger days had passed away with her youth and beauty, and the Isabella and Belvidera that once wrung every heart, over which Hazlitt confesses he had wept outright during a whole performance, had no affinity with that fat, sombre woman, of whose awful demeanor, even in private life, so many stories have been told.

Another luminary, young, beautiful, and sympathetic, Miss O'Neill, was rising to thrust her from her throne as she had thrust others. And so it became necessary to abdicate and lay down the laurel crown she had worn so long, ere it was rudely plucked from her head. "I feel as if I were mounting the first step of a

ladder conducting me to the other world," she said, sadly. Her farewell benefit took place on the 29th of June, 1812. Lady Macbeth was fitly chosen for her exit, and at the end of the sleep-walking scene, a nobly artistic audience insisted that the curtain should there fall, so that the last grand impression should not be disturbed. Yet her retirement did not make the sensation that might have been expected. As it has been before said, her powers were failing, and, privately, the public disliked her. A volume might be filled with enthusiastic descriptions of her acting by contemporary writers. None were more warm than that fine critic, Hazlitt, who wrote so much upon this favorite subject:

"The homage she has received is greater than that which is paid to queens," he said, at her farewell. "The enthusiasm she excited had something idolatrous about it; she was regarded less with admiration than with wonder, as if a being of a superior order had dropped from another sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. She raised tragedy to the skies, or brought it down from thence. It was something above Nature. We can conceive of nothing grander. She embodied to our imagination the fables of mythology, of the heroic and deified mortals of elder time. She was not less than a goddess, or than a prophetess inspired by the gods. Power was seated on her brow; passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine. She was tragedy personified. She was the stateliest ornament of the public mind. She was not only the idol of the people, she not only hushed the tumultuous shout of the pit in breathless expectation, and quenched the blaze of surrounding beauty in silent tears, but to the retired and lonely student, through long years of solitude, her face has shone as if an angel had appeared from heaven; her name has been as if a voice had opened the chambers of the human heart, or as if a trumpet had awakened the sleeping and the dead. To

have seen Mrs. Siddons was an event in every one's life; and does she think we have forgot her?"

"To see the bewildered melancholy of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep," writes Leigh Hunt, "or the widow's mute stare of perfected misery by the corpse of the gamester Beverley, two of the sublimest pieces of acting on the English stage, would argue this point [the greatness of her powers] better than a thousand critics. Mrs. Siddons has the air of never being an actress; she seems unconscious that there is a motley crowd called the pit waiting to applaud her, or that a dozen fiddlers are waiting for her exit."

It must have been a terrible renunciation to have retired from those dazzling triumphs into the monotony of private life. As she sat at home in the long evenings, she would say, "Now I used to be going to dress—now the curtain is about to rise." Her body was there, but her soul was still before the foot-lights. She played several times after her formal retirement for her brother Charles's benefit, and gave some performances at Edinburgh for her son's children. Her last appearance was in 1819, as Lady Randolph to Macready's Glenalvon. "It was not a performance," he writes in his diary, "but a mere repetition of the poet's text—no flash, no sign of her pristine, all-subduing genius." She received the homage of the great to the last; and when she lodged in town, files of carriages were nearly all day drawn up before the door of her lodgings. She survived until the year 1831, still continuing to delight select circles, even royal ones, with her fine private readings from Shakespeare and Milton.

In 1817, warned by increasing infirmities, Kemble gave a round of his great parts—in which he continually drew six-hundred-pound houses—and made his last ap-

pearance on June 23d of that year. To again quote Hazlitt:

"Mr. Kemble took his leave of the stage on Monday night in the character of Coriolanus. On his first coming forward to pronounce his farewell address, he was received with a shout like thunder; on his retiring after it the applause was long before it subsided entirely away. There is something in these partings with old public favorites exceedingly affecting. They teach us the shortness of human life, and the vanity of human pleasures. Our associations of admiration and delight with theatrical performers are among our earliest recollections, among our last regrets. They are links that connect the beginning and the end of life together; *their* bright and giddy career of popularity measures the arch that spans our brief existence. . . . He played the part as well as he ever did—with as much freshness and vigor. There was no abatement of spirit and energy—none of grace and dignity; his look, his action, his expression of the character, were the same as they ever were—they could not be finer."

I continue the description of the scene from Mr. Fitzgerald's biography of "The Kembles:"

"Kemble seemed to put his whole soul into the part, and, it was noticed, seemed to cast away all unfavorable checks and reserves, as though there was no further need for husbanding his strength. As he approached the last act a gloom seemed to settle down on the audience; and when, at the end, he came forward slowly to make his address, he was greeted with a shout like thunder of 'No farewell!' It was long before he could obtain silence, or could control his feelings sufficiently to speak. At last he faltered out, 'I have now appeared before you for the last time; this night closes my professional life.' At this a tremendous tumult broke out, with cries of 'No, no!' and, after an interval, he went on with the remainder of his

speech. . . . At the end he seemed to hurry over what he had to say, to be eager to finish, and withdrew with a long and lingering gaze, just as Garrick had done. Some one handed a wreath of laurel to Talma, to which was attached an inscription, bearing a request that Mr. Kemble would not retire, but would act at least a few times a year, so long as his strength would allow him. Kemble, however, had withdrawn, but the manager (Fawcett), coming out, assured them that it should be his pride to present it to Mr. Kemble. But in the green-room he received an unexpected shape of homage, for all his brother artists begged from him the various articles of his theatrical dress as memorials. Mathews obtained his sandals, Miss Brister his pocket-handkerchief; and, when he at last withdrew from the theatre, he found the entrances lined with all the assistants and supernumeraries, waiting to give him a last greeting."

After this a grand dinner was given in his honor at the Freemason's Tavern, Lord Holland in the chair; the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Duke of Bedford, and others of the highest nobility, together with the most eminent men in literature and art, were present. Not even Garrick had been so greatly honored. His savings had been but moderate, and soon afterward he went abroad, first to Toulouse, then to Lausanne, where he died in 1823. Once he returned to London for a short time, and from Hazlitt we obtain a last glimpse of the great actor in his decay:

"His face was as fine and as noble as ever, but he sat in a large arm-chair, bent down, dispirited, and lethargic. He spoke no word, but he sighed heavily, and, after drowsing thus for a time, went away."

It is doubtful whether, could John Kemble be revived and brought back to the stage, he would be success-

ful in the present day. We have not yet arrived at the end of the extraordinary revolution Kean's impulsive style of acting created in the dramatic art. It swept away at one blow the studied and artificial school of the Kembles, and brought us back to a more natural and impassioned style: which, however, in this eighth decade of the nineteenth century has degenerated into a bald realism, wholly devoid of poetry, passion, and artistic grace.

CHAPTER VII.

GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE.

Cooke's Youth and Struggles as a Strolling Player.—He appears in London after a Professional Life of Twenty-four Years.—His Immense Success in Shylock, Sir Pertinax, Sir Giles Overreach, Richard III., Falstaff, etc.—Disgusts the London Public by his Irregularities.—Tour in America and Incidents.—Death in New York.

THERE is a striking resemblance between the genius and characters of Cooke and Edmund Kean. Both were gifted with splendid talents, that through their own vices became a curse rather than a blessing to their possessors; their style of acting was similar; most of their triumphs were secured in the same parts; both destroyed health and fortune, lost the respect of the world, and sank into utter degradation through dissipated habits; and both commonly committed acts of extravagant eccentricity, to put it in the mildest form, that it is difficult to ascribe to sane men.

Cooke's parentage and place of birth are both doubtful; he has been claimed as an Irishman and a Scotchman,

but, according to his own statement on his death-bed, he was born in Westminster in 1756, and afterward removed to Berwick, where he was brought up. He was in the habit of boasting that his father was an army captain, but it is more probable that he was a sergeant. At all events his mother was left a widow in very straitened circumstances, while he was quite a child.

The Edinburgh theatrical company coming to Berwick for a short season appears to have decided George Frederick's destiny. He was taken to see "The Provoked Husband;" and from that time, he says, in a "Chronicle" which was found after his death among his papers, plays and playing were never absent from his thoughts. By-and-by he formed an amateur company of boys of his own age. Their theatre was a deserted barn, their scenery a motley patchwork of mat and paper, and their costumes such finery as they could borrow. He was at this time only thirteen years old; his mother was dead, and he was then under the protection of two aunts, who apprenticed him to a printer.

Three years after their first visit the Edinburgh actors paid a second to the town. Fain would young Cooke have attended every performance; but his funds would not permit, and many were the schemes he devised for a surreptitious entrance. One of these, told by himself, is extremely ludicrous. One night he slipped through the stage door before the keeper was posted, or any of the employés about, and groping his way behind the scenes sought for a place where he might remain concealed until the curtain rose, when he hoped to be able to ensconce himself in some obscure spot unobserved and get a glimpse of the performance. In a remote corner he found a very large barrel—nothing could be better for

his purpose. Dropping himself into it he found at the bottom two twenty-four-pound cannon-balls, about which, however, he did not trouble himself. Little did he imagine that he had taken refuge within the machine by which the Theatre Royal, Berwick, produced its stage thunder. But so it was. Just as the last bars of the overture were being played, the property man tied a piece of carpet over the top of the barrel, without perceiving in the dark its living occupant, raised it in his arms, no doubt wondering at its extra weight, and carried it to the side scenes. The play was "Macbeth," which opens with thunder and lightning. As the curtain bell sounded, away he sent the machine rolling. Horribly frightened, and pounded by the cannon-balls, Cooke roared out lustily, and, fighting to release himself, sent the barrel on to the stage, burst off the carpet head, and rolled out in front of the audience, scattering the three witches right and left.

Cooke's account of his early years is not sufficiently trustworthy to be quoted. It appears, however, he did not long remain in the printer's office, that he went to sea, and afterward spent some time in London, where he saw Macklin and Garrick in several of their finest parts. At twenty we find him making his professional *début* in a strolling company in the large room of a public-house at Brentford, as Dumont, in Rowe's "Jane Shore." During most of his years as a strolling actor, he kept a diary, a strange record of various and desultory reading—upon which he wrote remarks that indicate a shrewd though but half-cultivated intellect—of hard professional labor, of sad dissipation and attendant repentance, but yet no record of such miserable struggles as those of poor Kean.

At length, in 1794, he was engaged for Dublin, and, after eighteen years of probation, appeared for the first time before an audience worthy of those great talents which were already fully developed. But, alas, so convivial a city as the Irish capital was a bad home for one of Cooke's habits; and although his success as an actor was great, his dissipation, which there became worse than ever, ruined his prospects. Dunlap, in his life of Cooke, published in 1813, and Mathews, in his "Memoirs," relate an anecdote of this period which well illustrates his outrageous conduct. Mathews, then a very young man, was a member of the same company, and lived in the same house with him. One night, having played Mordecai, to Cooke's Sir Archy McSarcasm, in Macklin's "Love à la Mode," much to the latter's satisfaction, he was invited to sup and share a jug of whiskey-punch in the tragedian's room. The young novice delightfully accepted the invitation, thinking himself much honored, and failed not to pour forth those laudations upon his host's talents which were so grateful to George Frederick's ears. One jug of punch was quickly emptied and a second filled, and Cooke began to praise his guest in a patronizing way. "You are young," he said, "and want some one to advise and guide you. Take my word for it, there is nothing like industry and sobriety. In our profession, dissipation is the bane of youth; villainous company, low company, leads them from study," etc. Holding forth thus, the jugs of punch continued to disappear with ever-increasing rapidity. Mathews rose to leave, but was pushed back into his seat again. "You sha'n't stir; we'll have one more cruiskeen lawn, my dear fellow, and then you shall go to bed," said the tragedian, now growing very drunk. "You don't

know me. The world don't know me. Many an hour that they suppose I've wasted in drinking, I have devoted to the study of my profession; the passions, and all their variations; their nice and imperceptible gradations. You shall see me delineate the passions of the human mind, by facial expression." The power of the whiskey, however, acting in direct opposition to the will on his strong and flexible features, produced contortions and distortions of which he was insensible. Mathews, a little hazy himself from the potent liquor, half alarmed, and yet with difficulty repressing his laughter at these extraordinary grimaces, sat staring at him, endeavoring to understand these delineations, and wishing himself out of the room. After each horrible face, Cooke demanded, with an air of intense self-approval: "Well, sir, and what is that?" "It's very fine, sir," answered Mathews, without the remotest conception what he should say. "Yes, but what is it?" "Well—a—oh, yes—anger?" "You're a blockhead," roared the tragedian; "the whiskey has muddled your brains. It's fear—fear, sir." Then followed more contortions and more questions, but Mathews never guessed right. "Now, sir," said the angry delineator at last, "I will show you something you cannot possibly mistake." And he made a hideous face, compounded of Satanic malignancy and the leering of a drunken satyr. "What's that, sir?" "That? oh, revenge!" "Dolt, idiot! despite o'erwhelm thee," burst forth Cooke, furiously; "it is love!" This was too much; and, forgetful of consequences, Mathews fell back in his chair and roared with laughter. "What, sir! Do you laugh? Am I not George Frederick Cooke, born to command a thousand slaves like thee?" Mathews immediately apologized, averring that the punch had stupe-

fied him. This mollified his host's indignation, and, finding the jug empty, he called out for his landlady to refill it. But he had faithfully promised the previous one should be the last, and Mrs. Burns intended to keep him to his word. "Sure, Mr. Cooke," she answered from below, "I am going to bed, and you can't have any more to-night." "Indeed, but I will," he replied. Mathews tried to get away, but was again thrust into his chair, while Cooke reiterated his demand for more punch. But Mrs. Burns remained obdurate. Cooke took up the jug and smashed it upon the floor over her head. "Do you hear that, Mrs. Burns?" "Yes, I do, Mr. Cooke." Then smash went the chairs, the fire-irons, the table; and between each the question, "Do you hear that, Mrs. Burns?" "Indeed, but I do, and you'll be sorry for it to-morrow." Up went the window, and out, one after another, went the fragments of the broken furniture into the street. Mathews, believing he was in company with a madman, and now thoroughly frightened, endeavored to make a bolt, but was seized and dragged back. Finding him struggle violently, Cooke threw up the window and shouted, "Watch, watch!" A watchman, attracted by the uproar, was already beneath. "I give this man in charge," roared Cooke; "he has committed murder." "What do you mean?" cried the alarmed youth. "Yes, to my certain knowledge he has this night committed an atrocious, cold-blooded murder. He has most barbarously murdered an inoffensive Jew gentleman named Mordecai; I charge him with it in the name of Macklin, the author of '*Love à la Mode.*'" Here Mathews, by a desperate effort, wrenched himself away and fled, Cooke hurling after him the candle and candle-stick.

The disgrace attending the notoriety of this transaction drove him on to further mad intemperance ; the stage was abandoned, and, in a fit of drunkenness and despair, he enlisted as a private in a regiment destined for the West Indies. Fortunately for him, however, sickness prevented him embarking. Yet he remained in the army until 1796. In that year, Maxwell, the manager of the Portsmouth theatre, being in Southampton, was accosted by a soldier, in whom he recognized Cooke. He asked him for assistance to purchase his discharge ; with the aid of the managers of the Manchester theatre, this was accomplished. Maxwell heard no more of the truant for some weeks. One day a boy came to the Portsmouth theatre, and accosted him with : “ A poor, sick man, who has been a soldier, sir, is now at my mother’s, and wishes to see you before he dies.” He went to a low public-house, and there found Cooke in a state of the most abject misery. His Manchester friends had procured his discharge, and sent him money to pay his journey to that city ; the money was spent in drink, he was taken ill, crawled from Southampton to Portsmouth, and sank exhausted at this public-house. Again the managers came to the rescue, sent him money and clothes, and had him conveyed to London, where a friend of theirs received him, and undertook his escort into the north. But, stopping upon the road just before he arrived in Manchester, he became so intoxicated that the managers were obliged to disappoint a crowded house that had assembled to greet his return.

In 1797 he reappeared at Dublin, and spoke the address on the occasion of the opening of the new Theatre Royal in Crow Street. During the engagement, he played for the first time with John Kemble, who came to star.

One night while he was waiting at the side scene for his cue to go on, Kemble came up and said: "Mr. Cooke, you distressed me exceedingly in my last scene, I could scarcely get on. You did not give me more than one cue; you were very imperfect." "Sir, I was perfect," replied Cooke. "Excuse me, sir, you were not." "I was, sir." "You were not." "I'll tell you what: I'll not have your faults fathered upon me. And d— me, black Jack" (Kemble's nickname), "if I don't make you tremble in your pumps one of these days yet."

At length the opening came, and, in the year 1800, Cooke, then in the forty-fifth year of his age, was engaged for Covent Garden, for three years, at six, seven, and eight pounds a week; there he appeared on the 31st of October, as Richard the Third. "Never," he says, "was a reception more flattering, nor did ever I receive more encouraging, indulgent, and warm approbation than on that night, both through the play and at the conclusion. Mr. Kemble did me the honor of making one of the audience."

"His superiority over all other" (Richards), says his biographer, Mr. Dunlap, "in the dissimulation, the crafty hypocrisy, and the bitter sarcasm of the character, is acknowledged by every writer who has criticised his acting. . . . His triumph in this character was so complete, that after a struggle Mr. Kemble resigned it altogether to him."

During the season he played the part twenty-three times. A German writer, quoted by Dunlap, gives the following contrasted picture of Cooke:

"Cooke does not possess the elegant figure of Kemble; but his countenance beams with great expression. The most prominent features in the physiognomy of Cooke are a long and

somewhat hooked nose, of uncommon breadth between the eyes, which are fiery, dark, and at times terribly expressive, with prominent lids and flexible brows; a lofty and broad forehead, and the muscles around the mouth pointedly marked. His countenance is certainly not so dignified as Kemble's, but its expression of passion, particularly the worst passions of our nature, is stronger. His voice, though sharp, is powerful, and of great compass, a preëminence which he possesses by nature over Kemble, and of which he skillfully avails himself. His attitudes are far less picturesque than those of Kemble, but they are just, appropriate, and natural."

His second character was Shylock:

"Those who were present at Mr. Cooke's first exhibition of Shylock upon the London boards say that in the great scene of the third act he was greeted with shouts of applause. The savage exultation of his laugh, when the full amount of his enemy's loss is stated, was frightfully impressive."

Strange that a few years afterward Kean, who, as I have before remarked, so strongly resembled him, should have won his first two triumphs in the same parts, with only the order reversed. Cooke's third character was Sir Archy McSarcasm, his fourth Iago, which added another to his list of successes. Macbeth followed, but here he was much inferior to Kemble; yet he played it four nights to crowded houses. Kitely, in which he had seen Garrick, and remembered him, was his next part, and was deemed the most perfect of all he had yet performed.

"In depicting the restless starts and sallies of the soul," says a critic of the period, "under the influence of the green-eyed monster Jealousy, he marked every varied working of the mind, every abrupt transition of passion, with most felicitous

and energetic glow. But the scene in which, struggling with the apprehension of danger, and the shame of avowing that apprehension, he attempts to disclose, yet at the same time fears to betray, his jealous humor to his confidential servant Cash, is justly entitled to superior commendation. Here his powers found ample scope for exertion, and deservedly called forth tumultuous bursts of applause."

Sir Giles Overreach was another triumph; but in the Stranger, which he performed for his benefit, he could not approach Kemble's preëminence. The managers of Covent Garden gave him this benefit free of all expenses, and the receipts were five hundred and sixty pounds.

During this period he seems by an effort of will to have reformed, or at least to have modified his former vicious habits. But at the close of the London season he went "starring" in the provinces, and, returning to his old haunts and his old bad companions, fell back into dissipation and degradation. When on the opening night of his second season he was advertised to appear as Richard, he was playing at Newcastle with "a small, undisciplined set," to use his own words. The house was crowded, and the audience made a great disturbance when Lewis, the acting manager, was compelled to announce to them that Cooke had not arrived. Considerable excitement had been aroused on the occasion by the fact that Kemble, entering the lists with his rival, had announced the same play at Drury Lane.

And not until five weeks afterward did George Frederick make his appearance. How that interim was passed may be surmised. But after some clamor upon his first entrance, and an apologetic speech on his part, in which there was not one word of truth, the audience forgave him, and applauded his acting as enthusiastically as ever.

Although his conduct had already diminished his attractiveness, Harris, the manager, after giving him a second free benefit, the receipts of which, however, fell to four hundred and nine pounds, reengaged him for another three years at fourteen pounds a week: a miserable salary, after all, for a man of his abilities. His waning popularity rose again with his representation of Sir Pertinax McSycophant in Macklin's "Man of the World."

The following are extracts from one of Leigh Hunt's criticisms upon his acting in this part:

"You may see all the faults and all the beauties of Cooke in this single character. . . . If Cooke bows, it is with a face that says: 'What a fool you are to be deceived with this fawning!' If he looks friendly, it is with a smile that says: 'I will make use of you, and you may go to the devil.' A simple rustic might feel all his affections warmed at his countenance, and exclaim: 'What a pure-hearted old gentleman!' but a fine observer would descry, under the glowing exterior, nothing but professions without meaning, and a heart without warmth. The sarcasm of Cooke is at all times most bitter, but in this character its acerbity is tempered with no respect either for its object or for himself. His tone is outrageously smooth and deep; and when it finds its softest level, its under monotony is so full of what is called hugging one's self, and is accompanied with such a dragged smile and viciousness of leer, that he seems as if he had lost his voice through the mere enjoyment of malice. It is in thus acting that, in characters of the most apparent labor, as well as in a total neglect of study, this excellent actor surpasses all his contemporaries. His principal faults are confined to his person, for they consist in a monotonous gesture, and a very awkward gait. His shrinking rise of the shoulders, however, may give an idea of that contracted watchfulness with which a mean hypocrite retires into himself. His general air, indeed, his sarcastic cast of countenance, with its

close wideness of smile and its hooked nose, and his utter want of study, joined to the villainous characters he represents, are occasionally sufficient to make some people almost fall out with the actor."

To this criticism Dunlap adds the following observations, which add some additional touches to this fine picture of Cooke's style of acting.

"The neglect of study in Mr. Cooke, at least such study as is necessary to create excellence in other men, is a curious fact in his history; and one of the most extraordinary traits in the character of this extraordinary man is that ability which he possessed of seizing the perfect image of the person he would represent, and identifying it with his own feelings, so as to express every emotion designed by the author, as if that emotion was his own. And all this as if by intuition, for nobody knew of his studying, except in that hasty and desultory manner which his journal at times indicates. But his perception was uncommonly quick, and his earlier observations of men and their passions must have been uncommonly accurate. . . . Cooke, when he improved his own playing by what he had seen excellent in other players, did not imitate those players, but only seized what he saw natural in them, and made it his own in his own manner."

It was in this neglect of study, after he rose to eminence, for which no genius could compensate, that Cooke was so far inferior to his great successor, Kean, who, with all his faults, was an indefatigable student, and rendered the elder actor's failure in all the subtler parts of tragedy, such as *Hamlet*, so apparent.

The restraint he had put upon his inclinations during the first two years of his London engagement soon gave way: one night, in his third season, he came upon the stage in an evident state of intoxication, pleaded indispo-

sition as an apology, attempted to play, was hissed, and, unable to proceed, was obliged to retire. After this we find "too indisposed to act" frequently entered in his diary of provincial tours. One night he came on the stage as Sir Archy McSarcasm, with Johnstone, who was playing Sir Callaghan. There was a dead pause. Then Johnstone, advancing to the foot-lights, said, with a strong brogue: "Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Cooke *says* he can't spake." After a shout of laughter at this real Irish bull, the curtain fell amid a shower of hisses. At another time, after making a few ineffectual attempts to speak the dialogue, Cooke came forward, pressed his hand upon his chest, and, with a most pitiable face, stammered out: "Ladies and gentlemen—my old complaint—my old complaint." The humor of the naïve confession, although not intended as such, was irresistible, but the roar of laughter was quickly succeeded by loud sounds of indignation.

In the season of 1803-'4, Kemble and Mrs. Siddons came to Covent Garden. Kemble played Richmond to Cooke's Richard, Old Norval to his Glenalvon, Rolla to his Pizarro, Jaffier to his Pierre, Antonio to his Shylock, Henry IV. to his Falstaff, while Mrs. Siddons sustained the heroines of these plays. Such a cast had not been seen since the days of Garrick; but the infant phenomenon, Master Betty, could draw more by his parroted pipings at the other house than this splendid array of talent.

In the season of 1807-'8, he did not appear until March. He had been passing the interim in Appleby jail, where his creditors had placed him. For, in spite of the large sums he had made by his London benefits and provincial engagements, he was overwhelmed with debt. His ex-

travagance and reckless waste were terrible. One night he went into a low public-house in Manchester with the proceeds, amounting to nearly four hundred pounds, of his engagement in that town in his pocket. Some fellows began abusing the king and the constitution. Cooke, who was a strong loyalist, entered into a dispute, and challenged one of the men to determine the controversy by an appeal to fists. The fellow replied that he took the liberty of abusing him because he was rich and knew him to be a poor man. "Do I?" replied Cooke; "I'll show you that. There—look!" and he pulled a roll of bank-notes out of his pocket, and thrust them into the fire. "There, that's all I have in the world; now I am as poor as you, and now come on!"

His opening part upon his return from durance vile was Sir Pertinax, and the *Mirror*, noticing the performance, says:

"The many rumors of his sufferance by his spirits, and by bailiffs, of 'disastrous chances, of moving accidents by flood, of hair-breadth 'scapes, of being taken by the insolent foe, and his redemption thence,' seemed to have had such an effect upon the audience, that they appeared the more 'to love him for the dangers he had passed,' and with not three but six rounds of applause greeted his return. Such a house had not been seen since 'the little hour of little Betty.'"

From an entry in his diary, under date of the 30th of January, 1809, in which he complains of losing £3 6s. 8d. "by order of the state, this being the martyrdom of King Charles I." (on which day the theatres were then closed), his salary must have been raised to twenty pounds a week. But he was sinking more rapidly than ever in public estimation. Journals depreciated his acting, compared it unfavorably with far inferior players,

and made him besides a butt to shoot their frequently dull and coarse witticisms upon. His last season in London (1809-'10) culminated his degradation. More than once he came upon the stage only to be led off incapable of speech. The management could not depend on him from one hour to another. Even when he was comparatively sober a sudden caprice would determine him not to play; and from some place where he was not likely to be found, he would send word he should not act that evening. At others, after he had been given up in the theatre, and another, perhaps Kemble himself, was about to step on the stage for the part, he would appear suddenly at the wing dressed for the character. After each of his escapades there was a humble apology to be made to the audience, until indignation gave way to contempt. The 5th of June, 1810, when he played Falstaff, one of his finest parts, in the first part of Henry IV., was his last appearance upon the London stage. Thence he went to Liverpool, always one of his strongholds. One night, however, being attacked with his "old complaint," the audience angrily demanded an apology. "Apology from me! from George Frederick Cooke!" he cried. "Take it from this remark: There's not a brick in your infernal town which is not cemented by the blood of some slave." Cooper, the American actor, was in the town at the time, and offered him an engagement for America at twenty-five pounds a week. He was still bound, however, to Harris, the Covent Garden manager. But Cooper, who knew he would be a splendid speculation in New York, was determined to have him; and, after much manoeuvring, contrived to carry him off out of some vile Liverpool slum while in a state of intoxication, and got him on board a ship bound for

America, where he landed in the November of the same year.

He was the first great English actor who crossed the Atlantic, and Dunlap, himself an American, says :

“It appeared as impossible that the great London actor should be removed to America, as that St. Paul’s Cathedral should have been transported across the ocean. Englishmen in New York swore roundly it could not be. It was some other performer of the same name—it was even insinuated that the whole thing was an imposition.”

Dunlap, describing his first introduction to him, continues :

“The neatness of his dress, his sober suit of gray, his powdered gray hairs, and suavity of address, gave no indication of the eccentric being whose weaknesses had been the theme of the English fugitive publications; nor could the strictest examination detect any of those marks by which the votaries of intemperance, falsely called pleasure, are so universally stigmatized.”

He goes on to relate that Price, the American manager, on opening the door of the room where he was informed that Cooke awaited him, upon seeing a man so different to what he imagined the eccentric, depraved Cooke to be, shut the door, and told the servants he had been directed to the wrong apartment.

He appeared on the 21st of November as Richard. The excitement was enormous, the crush was unprecedented, hundreds were unable to gain admission, such a house had never before been seen in America. His reception was splendid.

“His appearance,” continues Dunlap, “was picturesque and proudly noble; his head elevated, his step firm, his eye beam-

ing fire. I saw no vestige of the venerable, gray-headed old gentleman I had been introduced to at the coffee-house; and the utmost effort of my imagination could not have reconciled the figure I now saw with that of imbecility and intemperance."

He was sober, played with all his greatness, and his success was enormous. His other celebrated parts followed; the houses, spite of snow-storms, which would on any other occasion, says his biographer, have rendered the theatre "a heartless void," were nightly crammed. In seventeen nights, there were taken twenty-one thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars. But, alas! he quickly fell into his old vices. The night of his benefit he appeared as Cato, without having once refreshed his memory by reading the part, and intoxicated as well; he uttered a string of incoherences, but scarcely one word of Addison's. This escapade was followed by others, and the old life of riot and excess recommenced; the old story of disappointed audiences, of disappearances for days together, until he was found penniless in some squalid den in the vilest purlieus of the city.

The second city of the States he visited was Boston, where he was also enthusiastically received. Thence he returned to New York, but his evil habits, his wild extravagancies, and, above all, his insolence to the people, had, even during his brief first visit, destroyed his popularity. He had a hatred of republican institutions, and never lost an opportunity of displaying it. A gentleman mentioning that his family were among the first settlers in Maryland, Cooke demanded if he had kept the family jewels: "I mean *the chains and handcuffs*," he added. Hearing the President was coming to see him act, he said: "What! I, George Frederick Cooke, who have played before the majesty of Britain, play before your Yankee

President! I'll not play before him. It is degradation enough to play before rebels, but I'll not go on for the amusement of a king of rebels, the contemptible king of Yankee-doodles." He asserted that when a youth he had been in the army during the American rebellion.

"The Yankee-doodles" were certainly a milder race then than now, or George Frederick's career would have been speedily cut short by bullet or bowie-knife. But rash valor was not among his failings. Indeed, he was always ready to retreat before the consequences of his insolence. One day he had a hot dispute with a bullying fellow in company with some others, and assailed him with the most abusive language. The fellow showed fight: Cooke cooled down. Then one of his companions took up the quarrel, and ejected his opponent. There was a row and a scuffle on the stairs. Cooke retired to his bedroom, and called his servant. "Sam, it's very late; help me off with my clothes; I'll go to bed." Just then one of the party from below came running up, and, finding the tragedian already half undressed, exclaimed, "Why, Mr. Cooke! why are you here, while Price is fighting that rascal for you?" "Where is the scoundrel?" cried Cooke, fiercely. "Sam, why are you so slow? Give me my boots. Where is the scoundrel? My coat, Sam. Where is the blackguard?" But the scrimmage was over long before Cooke was ready to take part in it. Some of his American friends generously entered into the humor of his Pistol-like bravery, and challenged him. "You must apologize or fight," said one of these, after the actor had been as usual railing against the country. "I will not apologize, young gentleman," he answered, loftily; "I will fight you. But if I fight you I shall shoot you. I am the best shot in Europe. If you

insist upon it I will shoot you. I would not willingly shed blood." But it may be doubted whether Cooke did not see through the quiz, for the whole routine of the duel was carried through; the pistols, loaded only with powder, were discharged; the antagonist, pretending to be shot, fell, and the actor, cutting the sleeve of his coat, made believe he was wounded in the shoulder.

At Philadelphia his success almost equaled that of New York. In sixteen nights the receipts were seventeen thousand three hundred and sixty dollars. Upon his return to Boston—

"Such was the rage," says Dunlap, "for seeing Cooke that, though it was the depth of winter, and excessively cold, the box-office has been surrounded from three o'clock in the morning until the time of opening, which was ten."

From the time of his landing in America his health began to fail, and on several occasions he was incapacitated from appearing through real indisposition. A constitution of iron alone could have withstood such years of debauchery, but it gave way at last. On the 31st of July, 1812, while playing Sir Giles Overreach at Boston, he was taken for death, but lingered till the following September, when he died. He was preparing at the time to return to England, Harris having written to him to come back to Covent Garden. "John Bull," says the letter, "is as fond of you as ever, and would be most happy to see his favorite again." We could have no better proof of Cooke's great abilities than such an offer after all his disgraceful escapades. There is not in the whole history of the stage a career more pitiable than this, not one for the errors of which we can plead so few excuses.

But not even after the grave closed over him had George Frederick, at least in body, ended his eccentric career. We will add here an extraordinary anecdote of the *post mortem* period, given on the authority of Dr. Doran.

After his death, the doctors not only opened his body to discover the cause, but Dr. Francis took possession of his head for phrenological purposes, and kept the skull in his surgery. One night "Hamlet" was performed at the "Park;" at the last moment the property man found he had no skull, and hastened to the doctor's to borrow one. The one lent was Cooke's. It was returned that night, but next evening, at a meeting of the Cooper Club, the circumstance being known to several there, a desire was expressed to examine the head of the great tragedian, which was again produced for the investigation of Daniel Webster, Henry Wheaton, and other celebrities.

Kean was a great admirer of Cooke, and when he was in New York visited his grave, which is in St. Paul's churchyard. Finding it without a memorial stone, he had the body taken up, removed to another place, and a handsome monument placed over it. In the transition from one grave to another he contrived to abstract one of the toe-bones, and this he brought back with him to London as a precious relic. Upon his arrival in England Elliston and several of the Drury Lane company went as far as Barnet to meet him. When he arrived at the hotel where they were to breakfast, he stopped all their greetings with: "Before you say a word, behold! Fall down and kiss this relic! This is the toe-bone of the greatest creature that ever walked the earth— of George Frederick Cooke. Come, down with you all and kiss the bone!"

Elliston, to humor him, dropped upon his knees and kissed the relic, and the others followed his example. Arriving home, Kean's first words to his wife were: "I have brought Charles a fortune. I have something that the directors of the British Museum would give ten thousand pounds for; but they sha'n't have it. Here it is, the toe-bone of the greatest man that ever lived—George Frederick Cooke. Now, observe: I put this on the mantel-piece; but let no one dare to touch it. You may all look at it—at a distance, but be sure no one presumes to handle it." Here it lay for months, an object of pride to the possessor, who never failed to point it out to his visitors. But Mrs. Kean, far from sharing her husband's satisfaction, held the relic in disgust. One day, resolved to no longer endure its sight, she caught hold of it with a piece of paper and threw it over the wall into the next garden. That night Kean returned, as was his wont, very inebriated. He missed the bone. He stormed, raved, summoned the servants out of their beds, and searched every likely and unlikely spot. At last the conviction was forced upon him that it was gone. Sinking into a chair, he exclaimed, with drunken lachrymoseness: "Mary, your son has lost a fortune. He was worth ten thousand pounds; now he is a beggar!"

CHAPTER VIII.

EDMUND KEAN.

The Misery and Suffering of his Childhood.—Vicissitudes as a Strolling Player.—Makes his *Début* in London as Shylock.—Instant Recognition by the Town.—His Career in England and America —Kean as an Actor and a Man.—Last Appearance in Conjunction with his Son.

Both the parentage and date of the birth of Edmund Kean are doubtful. There is not only an uncertainty about the father, a by no means uncommon circumstance in this world, but, what is much more rare, there is a suspicion concerning the mother. A Miss Tidswell, an actress, of whom we shall have occasion to speak immediately, has been accredited with bringing him into the world, and even Kean himself seems to have entertained this belief—“for why,” he says, “did she take so much trouble over me?”—while to no less a personage than a Duke of Norfolk has been given the honor of his paternity. One day in the lobby of Drury Lane Theatre, Lord Essex openly accused his grace of the fact, and asked him why he did not acknowledge his son. The duke protested his friend was mistaken, and added that if it were so he should be proud to own him. Edmund’s reputed mother, however, was a strolling actress named Nance Carey. Her father was a strolling player; her grandfather, Henry Carey, dramatist and song writer, and author of the sweet old lyric, “Sally in our Alley,” was the natural son of the great Lord Halifax. Edmund’s reputed father was one Kean, who is variously represented as a tailor or a builder. Some say the child was born in Castle Street, Leicester Square, others in a miserable garret in Ewer Street,

Southwark; and 1787, 1788, and 1789 are variously assigned as the dates of that event.

We hear nothing about the father; whoever he might have been, he seems to have taken no heed of his son from the time the latter came into the world. Neither was the mother more natural in her conduct; she abandoned him to the care of the before-named Miss Tidswell, who seems to have been the only person who attended on her in her miserable confinement. At three years old he is said to have been a Cupid in one of the ballets at the Opera House. At five he was certainly one of the imps that John Kemble introduced into the witches' scenes in "Macbeth." But wild, mischievous propensities were early developed in the boy, and he and his companions, playing some tricks in the cavern scene one night, which were not in their parts, were all dismissed.

After this he seems to have been sent to school in Orange Court, Leicester Square, and Miss Tidswell taught him to recite, fettering his erratic propensities by tying him up to a bed-post, and by occasionally severely, though kindly, correcting him. He was a weakly, sickly child, with bent legs and grown-out ankles, which necessitated the use of irons; these fortunately strengthened and straightened his limbs and saved him from deformity. And so passed his infant years.

By-and-by his mother, discovering, we suppose, that he might be of use to her, turned up again, after a long disappearance, claimed him, and took him away from his protectress. A more disreputable vagabond than Nance Carey it would be difficult to conceive; when strolling failed she tramped the country with perfumes and face powders, and such like commodities. Edmund carried the merchandise, and when the opportunity pre-

sented itself recited scenes and speeches from plays, as he had been taught by Miss Tidswell, at taverns and farms, and sometimes at gentlemen's houses, giving imitations of Garrick in "Richard," learned, of course, second-hand, but said to be very good.

Among Miss Carey's customers was Mr. Young, a surgeon, the father of the future great tragedian. And it is related in the life of the latter how once after a dinner-party in that gentleman's house the young vagrant was had in to recite, while his mother waited in the hall, and how beside his father's chair stood a handsome boy of ten, named Charles. And so, strangely, at the beginning of their lives met the two men who were thereafter to be the great rivals of the London stage. Mr. Young recommended Nance's wares to a Mrs. Clarke of Guildford Street. Wherever she went she talked about the talents of her son, which brought her in far more money than her perfume-bottles and pomatum, and her crafty eulogies soon excited the curiosity of Mrs. Clarke to see this prodigy. His first introduction to this lady is thus graphically described by Barry Cornwall in his "Life of Kean:"

"The door was thrown open, and a pale, slim boy of about ten years old entered, very poorly clad, ragged, with dirty hands, face unwashed, delicate skin, brilliant eyes, superb head of curled and matted hair, and a piece of hat in his hand. With the bow and air of a prince he delivered his message: 'My mother, madam, sends her duty, and begs you will be so good as to lend her a shilling to take her spangled tiffany petticoat out of pawn, as she wants it to appear in at Richmond to-morrow.' 'Are you the little boy who can act so well?' inquires the lady. A bow of assent and a kindling cheek were the sole reply. 'What can you act?' 'Richard the Third, Speed the Plough, Hamlet,

and Harlequin,' was the quick answer. 'I should like to see you act.' 'I should be proud to act to you.'"

And so it was arranged that he should give her a taste of his quality that evening. Several friends were invited to witness the performance. At a little after six there came—

"The same thundering rap which had preceeded his advent in the morning. His face was now clean, the delicacy of his complexion was more obvious than before, and his beautiful hair had been combed, and shone like a raven's wing. His dress had indeed suffered no improvement, but a frilled hand-kerchief of his mother's was stuck inside his jacket, and was more than a substitute for a shirt collar."

The lady takes him away to her dressing-room to make some improvement in his costume, puts on him a black riding-hat and feathers, which she turns up at one side with pins; a sword and belt are also found and buckled round his waist. These appendages to his every-day rags certainly give the boy a somewhat comical appearance, and would excite the risibility of the guests but for the intense earnestness with which he dashes to the farther end of the room which has been fixed upon for the stage, and where there are curtains and a door for exit, and before the people have time to laugh begins his recitation.

"It was no small task that lay before him," continues his biographer, "to face the smiles of an audience skeptical of his talents, and to conquer them. Yet he did this, nay, more; for the expression in the countenances of his audience changed from contempt or distrust into attention, from attention to admiration—to silent wonder—to tears."

A shower of sixpences and shillings rewarded his

efforts, but he refused to pick them up, and they were with difficulty forced upon him. Such was the boy's pride when free from the baleful influence of his vagabond mother.

This acting led to important consequences: Mrs. Clarke, struck by the boy's talents and pitying his condition, prevailed upon her husband to allow her to take him under her protection. She placed him at school, had him taught riding, fencing, dancing, and treated him as though he had been her own child, and he in return continued to delight her and her friends by his recitations. This lasted nearly two years. One day a lady and gentleman and their daughters came on a visit to Guildford Street; it was arranged they were all to go to the theatre that night, and mention was made of young Edmund accompanying them. "What, does *he* sit in the box with us!" exclaimed the snob, whom we have called gentleman above. They were at dinner when these words were spoken; the boy, crimson with mortification, dashed down his knife and fork, rose from the table, left the room and the house, resolving never again to enter it. He walked to Bristol, and tried to get on board a ship as cabin-boy, but all the captains pronounced him too small. Then he trudged back to London, supporting himself on the way by reciting at public-houses. One morning he was found by a man who knew him, ragged and foot-sore, upon a dung-heap in a mews near Guildford Street, and was taken back to his former home. But such an escapade could not be pardoned; some money being collected at a performance he gave, a sort of farewell benefit, the kind lady dismissed her unruly *protégé*, in whom were so strangely combined the pride of an aristocrat and the tastes of a gypsy.

In 1804 Jerrold informs us that Kean joined his father's company at Sheerness ; he still dressed as a boy and still retained his mother's name of Carey. He opened in George Barnwell and Harlequin. He played the whole round of tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, pantomime, and sang comic songs, and all for fifteen shillings a week ! Not being of provident habits, and already giving way to that dissipation which marked his whole life, such a stipend left little for times of enforced idleness. The want of the smallest coin frequently put him to terrible shifts. Once being at Rochester without a penny to pay the ferry toll, he, with his whole wardrobe tied up in a pocket handkerchief and slung round his neck, swam across the river. A few years afterward, while proceeding to an engagement at Braintree in Essex, he found himself on the Kentish shore in the same impecunious condition. There was nothing for it but to swim across the Thames, which he accordingly did. He was to open that night in Rolla. All wet as he was, he set forward toward his destination, and arrived just in time, without being able to procure any refreshment, to get upon the stage. But exhausted nature gave way ; he fainted in the middle of a scene. A fever and an ague were the results of that day's work.

He afterward went to Belfast, where he had the honor of performing with Mrs. Siddons. The first part he played with her was Osmyn, in "Zara ;" but he was grossly imperfect, and intoxicated as well, and excited the great lady's supreme disgust. Yet the next night he more than redeemed himself, at least as an actor, by his performance as Young Norval. The star pronounced that he played "well, *very* well, but," she added, with a lofty look, "it's a pity, there's too little of you to do

anything." She little thought he was one day destined to snatch the sceptre from the Kemble grasp. In 1806 Miss Tidswell procured him an engagement at the Hay-market to play small parts—they were very small indeed, servants, alguazils, messengers—yet he worked hard to make the most of them. "Look at that little man," sneered an actor one night, "he is trying to make a part out of nothing!" But his restless ambition could not remain content in so subordinate a position, and the next year we find him back at Sheerness, playing everything for one guinea a week, which, however, was an advance of six shillings upon his former stipend. One night he was acting Alexander the Great, in Lee's tragedy; some officers in the stage-box annoyed him by laughing and calling out "Alexander the Little." At length, unable to endure this any longer, he advanced, with folded arms and a look that appalled the sneerers, close to the box and said: "Yes, but with *a great soul!*!" Jerrold, writing of his versatility and ingenuity, says: "All the models for the tricks of the pantomime of 'Mother Goose,' as played at Sheerness, were made by him out of matches, pins, and paper."

At Gloucester, his next engagement, he met his future wife, Mary Chambers, a Waterford girl who had been a governess, and had then just entered the theatrical profession. Their first introduction did not at all promise such a catastrophe as matrimony. "Who is that shabby little man?" she inquired of the manager, as he stood at the wings. The piece they first played in together was "Laugh When You Can." The lady took the part of Mrs. Mortimer, Kean that of Sambo; he was very imperfect, and when they came off the stage, Miss Chambers, very angry and almost crying, objurgated him

with : "It is very shameful, sir, that you should not know a word of your part." Kean made no reply, but went to the manager and asked : "Who the devil is that?" Master Betty, the "Young Roscius," came to Gloucester to "star," and Kean was cast Laertes to his Hamlet. On the day of performance he disappeared; for three days and three nights no tidings could be heard of him; men were sent out in all directions to seek him; he was found at last returning to the town. He went at once to the lodgings of Miss Chambers, to whom he was now engaged.

"Where *have* you been, Mr. Kean?"

"In the fields, in the woods: I am starved; I have eaten nothing but turnips and cabbages since I have been out. But I'll go again to-morrow, and again and again, and as often as I see myself put in for such a character. I'll play second to no man save John Kemble."

He and Miss Chambers were united in 1808, and the same year they accepted an engagement at Birmingham at £1 1s. each per week; this was afterward increased ten shillings in consideration of his acting harlequin. No contrast can be more striking than that between the past and present of theatrical salaries both in town and country; a leading actor in such a theatre as Birmingham would now command six or eight pounds a week. While fulfilling this engagement he played with Stephen Kemble, the man who acted Falstaff without padding, and was told by him that he had played Hotspur as well as the great John, his brother.

It is a received opinion that Kean's acting was wholly spontaneous and unstudied; this is a mistake. A contemporary writer of this period says: "He used to mope about for hours, walking miles and miles alone with his

hands in his pockets, thinking intensely on his characters. No one could get a word from him ; he studied and slaved beyond any actor I ever knew." Neither did he relax his labors when he had reached the highest pinnacle of fame. It is related of him that, when studying Maturin's "Bertram," he shut himself for two days to study the one line, "Bertram has kissed thy child!" It made one of those electric effects which from their vividness were supposed to be merely impulsive. Kean had great natural genius, but had he not bestowed upon it perfect cultivation, it would never have made him a great actor.

He seems never to have remained long in one engagement ; his proud, impetuous temper, which could endure neither reproof nor humiliation, and his irregular habits, brought about continual disagreements with his managers, and constant changes. Hence the miseries he endured ; for even in those days of pitiful salaries the country actor, if provident, could contrive to live in respectability ; but Kean suffered under a chronic destitution.

Birmingham did not long contain this erratic spirit ; his next destination was Swansea. But ere he could leave the former town he had to borrow two pounds of his new manager to clear his liabilities, and then walk the journey with a wife within a few weeks of her confinement. Barry Cornwall gives a sad but striking picture of this journey :

"Kean, dressed in blue from head to foot, with his dark, sharp, resolute face, a black stock, and four swords over his shoulder suspending the family bundle of clothes, looked like a poor little navy lieutenant, whom the wars had left on half-pay and penniless, trudging on with his wife to his native village."

They had started with only a few shillings, and upon

arriving at Bristol found themselves penniless and obliged to write to Swansea for another loan, which, when it came, was nearly all swallowed up by the expenses they had incurred while waiting for it. A passage to Newport in a barge laden with hemp and tar followed: and thence to their destination on foot. Sometimes they encountered good Samaritans who would not take their money for the frugal meal they ordered; at others brutes who refused a drink of milk to the poor and foot-sore woman who scarcely knew an hour she might not be seized with premature pangs of maternity.

Not long enough, however, for the child to be born, did they remain at Swansea; that event took place at Waterford in September, 1809. He was still under the same manager, Cherry, however. At Waterford he met the afterward celebrated dramatist, Sheridan Knowles, then an obscure actor like himself; and for Kean was written his first play, never published, "Leo the Gipsy," in which he made a great success. Grattan gives the following description of his benefit performance in the town:

"The play was Hannah More's tragedy of 'Percy,' in which he, of course, played the hero. Edwina was played by Mrs. Kean, who was applauded to her heart's content. Kean was so popular, both as an actor and from the excellent character he bore, that the audience thought less of the actress's demerits than of the husband's feelings; and besides this, the *débutante* had many personal friends in her native city and among the gentry of the neighborhood, for she had been governess to the children of a lady of good fortune, who used all her influence at this benefit. After the tragedy Kean gave a specimen of tight-rope dancing, and another of sparring with a professional pugilist. He then played the leading part in a musical inter-

lude, and finished with Chimpanzee, the monkey, in the melodramatic pantomime of ‘*La Pérouse*,’ and in this character he showed agility scarcely since surpassed by Mazurier and Gouffé, and touches of deep tragedy in the monkey’s death-scene, which made the audience shed tears.”

At last, after several months more of strolling, full of varied misery, came what seemed to be a stroke of luck, but which afterward proved a disaster that once threatened to mar his fortunes. He had been in correspondence with Elliston concerning an engagement at the new theatre in Drury Lane, now the Olympic; this he at last closed with for a salary of three pounds a week, but he could not get any definite time fixed for opening, and by-and-by Elliston seemed inclined to depart from the stipulations of the agreement, and so the business remained uncertain. In the mean time, while Kean was at Teignmouth, Doctor Drury, once head-master of Harrow, saw him act on his benefit night. When Mrs. Drury came next day to pay for her box, she said how highly gratified both herself and husband had been with his performance; and, better still, that the doctor would on the following day dine in company with Mr. Pascoe Greenfell, one of the committee of Drury Lane, and he would try to procure him an opening at that theatre. In due time arrived a letter requesting him to come up to London immediately. As usual he had no funds; all depended upon his benefit, and to obtain this he must play out his engagement. And so he had to journey from Teignmouth to Barnstaple, and thence to Dorchester, suffering all the tortures of hope deferred.

One night, in the autumn of the year 1814, while performing in the last-named town—

“The curtain drew up,” to quote the actor’s own words, “I

saw a wretched house ; a few people in the pit and gallery, and three persons in the boxes, showed the quality of the attraction we possessed. In the stage-box, however, there was a gentleman who appeared to understand acting—he was very attentive to the performance. Seeing this, I was determined to play my best." (The part was Octavian, in Colman's "Mountaineers.") "The strange man did not applaud, but his looks told me he was pleased. After the play I went to my dressing-room to change my dress for the savage (a pantomime character) so that I could hear every word that was said overhead. I heard the gentleman ask Lee, the manager, the name of the performer who played Octavian. 'Oh,' replied Lee, 'his name is Kean ; a wonderfully clever fellow.' 'He is certainly very clever, but he is very small,' said the gentleman. 'His mind is large, no matter for his height,' answered Lee. By this time I was dressed ; I therefore mounted to the stage. The gentleman bowed to me, and complimented me slightly upon my playing. 'Well,' he said, 'will you breakfast with me to-morrow ? I shall be glad to have some conversation with you. My name is Arnold ; I AM THE MANAGER OF DRURY LANE THEATRE.' I staggered as if I had been shot."

As soon as the performance was over and he could tear off his dress, he rushed home. Agitation would scarcely allow him to speak. "My fortune's made, my fortune's made," he gasped at last. Then he told the good news. But as he finished, his eyes fell upon his poor sickly first-born, then very ill. "Let but Howard live, and we shall be happy yet," he exclaimed hopefully. Alas ! the proceeds of his benefit in that very town had to be devoted to the poor boy's burial.

The result of the appointment with Arnold was a three years' engagement at Drury Lane, at eight, nine, and ten pounds per week. A few days afterward Howard died. "The joy I felt," he wrote to Arnold, "three

days since at the flattering prospects of future prosperity is now obliterated by the unexpected loss of my child."

At last, on the 6th of November, he contrived to get to town. His salary was to commence at once, but when he went to the treasury he encountered a sudden and unexpected rebuff. Elliston had put in his prior claim, and Arnold very angrily asserted that he had engaged himself under false pretenses. Kean wrote a letter detailing every point of his transactions with the manager of the Wych Street theatre, in which he endeavored to show that that gentleman had justly forfeited all claim to his services, by having been the first to violate the terms of agreement. We have not space to enter into the merits of the transaction ; Elliston had evidently acted very shiftily toward the poor, unknown actor, taking advantage of his position, and Kean, upon the prospect of the better engagement opening to him, had done everything in his power to break the agreement. It may be said that neither party acted in strict honor. The new year came, and more than one actor had made his *début* at Drury Lane and failed. The fortunes of the theatre were in a desperate condition, the expenses far exceeding the receipts, and inevitable bankruptcy was looming in the no distant future. At length the dispute between Elliston and Kean was adjusted by an actor named Bernard being handed over to the former as a substitute, the extra amount of his salary, two pounds a week, being deducted from Kean's. From the end of November to the end of the following January, Kean existed, Heaven alone knows how, for the management of Drury Lane refused to pay him a shilling. All that he had ever suffered could not have equaled the misery of those two months of oscillation between hope

and despair amid hunger and wretchedness. Arnold now, as a *pis aller*, made up his mind to give him a trial. But the troubles were not yet over. Now rose a dispute as to the opening part; Arnold wanted Richard, but Kean knew the disadvantage his small figure would be at, when compared with the majestic Kemble, and answered: "Shylock or nothing." * There was marvelous resoluteness in this determination, considering all he had passed through, which was sufficient to crush the strongest spirit. But it succeeded, and the 26th of January, 1814, was decided for his appearance. One rehearsal only was vouchsafed him, and that was hurried and careless. The actors sneered at his figure, at his shabby coat with the capes, at his business, declared it would not do, and prophesied certain failure. He went home; "I must dine to-day," he said, and for the first time for many days indulged in the luxury of meat. Then all that he had to do was to wait as patiently as he could for the night. "My God!" he exclaimed, "if I succeed I shall go mad!" Terrible prophecy. Volumes could not better describe the agitation of his mind.

As the church clocks were striking six he sallied forth from his lodgings in Cecil Street. His parting words to his wife were: "I wish I was going to be shot!" In his hand he carried a small bundle containing shoes, stockings, wig, and other trifles of costume. The night was very cold and foggy; there had been heavy snow, and a thaw had set in; the streets were almost impas-

* His desire, however, when he first came to town, had been to open in Knowles's play of "Leo the Gipsy," which has been mentioned a page or two back. And he certainly would have used every effort to have done so, but, fortunately for him, the MS. was lost and no copy was extant.

sable, with slush which penetrated through his worn boots and chilled him to the bone. He darted quickly through the stage door, wishing to escape all notice, and repaired to his dressing-room. There the feelings of the actors were shocked by another innovation ; he was actually going to play Shylock in a black wig instead of the traditional red one. They smiled among themselves, shrugged their shoulders, but made no remark ; such a man was beyond remonstrance—besides, what did it matter ? he would never be allowed to appear a second time. Jack Bannister and Oxberry were the only ones who offered him a friendly word. When the curtain rose the house was miserably bad, but by-and-by the overflow of Covent Garden, which was doing well at that time, began to drop in and make a tolerable audience. His reception was encouraging. At his first words, “Three thousand ducats, well !” Dr. Drury, who was in front, pronounced him “safe.” At “I will be assured I may,” there was a burst of applause, and at the great speech ending with “And for these courtesies I’ll lend you thus much monies,” the sounds of approbation were very strong. Even as the curtain fell upon the first act success was almost insured, and already the actors who had treated him so superciliously began to gather round with congratulations. But he shrank from them, and wandered about in the darkness at the back of the stage. The promise of the first act was well sustained in the second. But the great triumph was reserved for his scene with Salanio and Salarino in the third, where the flight of his daughter Jessica with a Christian is told him ; there so terrible was his energy, so magnificent his acting, that a whirlwind of applause shook the house. Then came the trial scene, grander

still in its complex emotions and its larger scope for great powers, and all was so novel, so strange, so opposed to old traditions. When the curtain finally fell upon the wild enthusiasm of the audience, the stage-manager who had snubbed him offered him oranges; Arnold, who had bullied and "young man'd" him, brought him negus.

Drunk with delight he rushed home, and with half-frenzied incoherency poured forth the story of his triumph. "The pit rose at me!" he cried. "Mary, you shall ride in your carriage yet! Charles," lifting the child from his bed, "shall go to Eton." Then his voice faltered, and he murmured, "If Howard had but lived to see it!"

The "Merchant of Venice" was played several nights in succession, and the receipts rose from one hundred to six hundred. His next part was Richard—the *second* part is always the touchstone of an actor's success; he here entered the lists with Cooke and Kemble, and memories of Garrick's splendid performance had not yet died out among old play-goers. In Shylock his small stature mattered little, but in Richard that disadvantage would be glaringly perceptible; he approached the part with fear and trembling. "I am so frightened," he said, before the curtain rose, "that my acting will be almost dumb show to-night." But nevertheless he took both audience and critics by storm. Cooke, the great Richard of the day, was said to be left behind at an immeasurable distance; no such performance had been seen since the days of Garrick. Electricity itself was never more instantaneous in its operation. Such were a few of the eulogies showered upon him. But the terrible excitement he had undergone laid him up for a week. Actors now boast of playing this arduous part nearly a hundred

successive nights; as *they* play it there is nothing wonderful in the feat, and then they have no inconvenient modesty to exhaust their energies. On the day of the second performance of this character, the doors were besieged soon after noon, and at night hundreds were unable to gain admission. The beauties of this performance are said to have been so marvelous that a glance, the pronouncing of such common phrases as "Good-night, my lords," brought down thunders of applause. His next character was Hamlet, which, although full of fine points, and the one, he said, to which he had devoted the deepest study, did not equal his previous successes. Othello and Iago, played alternately, were his next triumphs.

"In the tender scene of Othello," says Dr. Doran, "(where love for Desdemona was above all other passions, even when for love he jealously slew her), he had as much power over his 'bad voice,' as his adversaries called it, as John Kemble over his asthmatic cough, and attuned it to the tenderness to which he had to give expression. In the fiercer scenes he was unsurpassable, and, in the great third act, none who remember him will, I think, be prepared to allow that he ever had, or is likely to have, an equal."

His Iago was quite original; he entirely discarded the old conventional villain of the stage, and played him lightly and naturally.

When the season closed he had performed Shylock fifteen times, Richard twenty-five, Hamlet eight, Othello ten, Iago eight, and Luke ("Riches," Massinger's "City Madam" altered) four. Of those seventy nights the profits were £17,000. Previously there had been one hundred and thirty-nine nights of continuous loss. In the second season he played Macbeth, another grand

performance; Romeo, which was said to revive the glories of "silver-tongued Barry." But the triumph of this season was Zanga, in Young's "Revenge." As one, who stood among the crowd in the pit-passage, heard a shout and clamor of approbation within, he asked if Zanga had just previously said, "Then lose her!" for that phrase, when uttered by Kean in the country, used to make the walls shake; and he was answered that it was so. Southey and a friend went to see him in this play. When Zanga, having consummated his vengeance and uttered the words, "Know then, 'twas I!" raised his arms over the fainting Alonzo, his attitude, the expression of his features, were so terrible, so appalling, that Southey exclaimed: "He looks like Michael Angelo's rebellious archangel!"—"He looks like the archfiend himself," said the other.

"But among all his new personations, Sir Giles Overreach," says Doran, whose opinion, as one who has seen Kean act, is invaluable, "stands preëminent for its perfectness from the first words, 'Still cloistered up,' to the last convulsive breath drawn by him in that famous *one* scene of the fifth act, in which, through his terrible intensity, he once made so experienced an actress as Mrs. Glover faint away; not at all out of flattery, but from emotion. . . . In this last character all the qualities of Kean's voice came out to wonderful purpose, especially in the scene where Lovel asks him:

'Are you not moved with the sad imprecations
And curses of whole families, made wretched
By your sinister practices?'

To which Sir Giles replies :

'Yes! as rocks are,
When foamy billows split themselves against
Their flinty ribs; or as the moon is mov'd
When wolves, with hunger pin'd, howl at her brightness.'

I seem still to hear the words and the voice as I pen this passage; now composed, now grand as the foamy billows; so flute-like on the word 'moon,' creating a scene with the sound, and anon sharp, harsh, fierce in the last line, with a look upward from those matchless eyes, that rendered the troop visible, and their howl perceptible to the ear; the whole serenity of the man, and the solidity of his temper, being less illustrated by the assurance in the succeeding words than by the exquisite music in the tone with which he uttered the word 'brightness.'"

Maturin's "Bertram," a gloomy but powerful play, and Sir Edward Mortimer, in "The Iron Chest," may be added to his list of great triumphs.

He was now the lion of the day; all the greatest men of the time, poets, statesmen, nobles, crowded his dressing-room and invited him to be their guest. Lord Byron sent him presents and invited him to dinner. At the close of the Drury Lane season he went "starring" into the country. At Edinburgh he was paid one hundred guineas a night for six nights. Fortune poured down upon him her Danaë showers, and we have pictures of young Charles playing with heaps of guineas, and bank-notes littering the room.

In succeeding seasons he appeared in many new parts, but made only one great success, King Lear. In 1820 he paid his first visit to America. Upon his return he appeared in a great variety of characters, tragic and comic, far too many for his fame, which began to be injured by such injudicious displays of versatility.

It is sad to turn from these records of splendid genius to those of the actor's private life. Success did drive him mad, for only a madman could have so trampled upon the glorious gifts of Fortune as he did; dissipation, in its worst form, frequently too obvious to the eyes of

the audience, marring his acting and degrading him as a man, and a preference for low company, were rapidly preparing his downfall. He would quit the society of Lord Byron for that of pugilists! But probably this was more a manifestation of intense pride and sensitiveness than the result of preference. He was painfully conscious of the defects of his education, and of his ignorance of the manners of good society; to commit a solecism in good-breeding was exquisite pain to him; thus the apprehension of doing so kept him in a state of extreme discomfort. Among his companions of the tavern he had no such fears, and was, besides, what he liked to be—a king. At length occurred that terrible scandal (in connection with the wife of a certain alderman) which blighted his whole future life and wrecked his home-happiness forever; the audience, that once hung so breathlessly upon his lips and hailed him with such shouts of acclamation, now howled and hissed and almost drove him from the stage. Dauntless as ever, he gave them scorn for scorn, insult for insult, as daringly as ever he did the poor yokels who offended him in his strolling days. But such a contest could not but terminate in his own discomfiture; his friends and patrons fell from him, his wife and child left him, the latter taking to the stage to support his mother. This last was, perhaps, the heaviest blow of all to Kean, who was bitterly opposed to Charles becoming an actor, and there was estrangement for years between father and son. They were reconciled only when the former was upon the brink of the grave. Deserted by friends and fortune, England was no longer a home for him, and so he paid a second visit to America.

“I shall not soon forget,” to again quote the doctor, “that January night of 1827, on which he reappeared at Drury Lane in Shylock. A rush so fearful, an audience so packed, and a reconciliation so complete, acting so faultless, and a dramatic enjoyment so exquisite, I never experienced. Nothing was heeded—indeed, the scenes were passed over until Shylock was to appear; and I have heard no such shout since as that which greeted him. Fire, strength, beauty, every quality of the actor, seemed to have acquired fresh life. It was all deceptive, however. The actor was all but extinguished after this convulsive, but seemingly natural, effect. He lay in bed at the Hummum’s hotel all day, amusing himself melancholily with his Indian gewgaws, and trying to find a healthy tonic in cognac.”

Grattan’s description of his appearance soon afterward, in his play of “Ben Nazir,” is a dark picture of failing powers. After describing his entrance, his splendid dress, and the thunders of applause that greeted him, he goes on to say :

“He spoke, but what a speech! The one I wrote consisted of eight or nine lines; *his* was of two or three *sentences*, but not six consecutive words of the text. His look, his manner, his tone, were to *me* quite appalling; to any other observer they must have been incomprehensible. He stood fixed, drawled out his incoherent words, and gave the notion of a man who had been half-hanged, and then dragged through a horse-pond. . . . Kean went through it like a man in the last stage of exhaustion and decay. The act closed, a dead silence followed the fall of the curtain.”

Yet still at times transient gleams of his old powers would burst forth with all the old electric fire, and audiences still crushed to suffocation to see him.

“To those,” says Doran, “who saw him from the front, there was not a trace of weakening power in him. But oh, ye

few who stood between the wings, where a chair was placed for him, do you not remember the saddening spectacle of that wrecked genius?—a man in his very prime, with not merely the attributes of age about him, but with some of the infirmities of it, which are wont to try the heart of love itself. Have you forgotten that helpless, speechless, fainting mass bent up in that chair; or the very unsavory odor of the very brown, very hot, and very strong brandy-and-water, which alone kept alive the once-noble Moor? Ay, and still-noble Moor; for when his time came, he looked about as from a dream, and sighed, and painfully got to his feet, swayed like a column, an earthquake, and in not more time than is required in telling it, was before the audience, as strong and as intellectually beautiful as of old; but only happy in the applause, which gave him a little breathing-space, and saved him from falling dead upon the stage.”

Still for another year or two he went on acting, trying to create new parts, but memory and power failing him, and all the beauty of his face gone, although he was scarcely forty years of age.

On the 25th of March, 1833, came the end. That night was to celebrate the reconciliation between the father and son, and for the first and the last time they were to appear on the stage together, Charles playing Iago to his father's Othello. The event created a great excitement among play-goers; the house was crammed. Kean went through the part “dying as he went,” until he came to the “Farewell,” and the strangely-appropriate words “Othello's occupation's gone.” Then he gasped for breath, and fell upon his son's shoulder, moaning, “I am dying—speak to them for me!” And so the curtain descended upon him—forever. He was conveyed to Richmond. “Come home to me; forget

and forgive!" he wrote to his wife. And she came. An hour before he died, he sprang out of bed, exclaiming, "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" and he expired with the dying words of Octavian, "Farewell, Flo—Floranthe!" on his lips. This was on the 15th of May, 1833. He was buried in Richmond church-yard.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLES YOUNG.

Kean's Rival in Acting, and Contrast in Character.—A Reputable, Laborious, and Conscientious Life.—Charles Young holds the London Stage for Twenty-five Years against Kemble, Cooke, and Garrick.—The English Talma, and his Intimacy with Sir Walter Scott and other Great Men of the Time.

THE last chapter sketched the career of a great but most erring and unhappy genius; the present has taken that of an actor who in every respect was his opposite. Yet man is much as his opportunities make him; and while Kean was reared miserably, cursed in a bad mother, a proud soul exposed to every humiliation of destitution, Young was brought up in comfort, almost affluence, and received the training and education of a gentleman. Few if any of the actor's vicissitudes and trials fell to his lot; whether by force of ability or good fortune, probably a little of both, he escaped that dreary progression, those toils and hardships, which have usually imbibed and checkered the lives of the most fortunate actors. He mounted at once to the highest rung of the ladder; and after a few years of probation in comfortable provincial engagements, he took that position

upon the London stage which he relinquished only by his own free will, and retired into private life a man honored by all who knew him.

Such contrasts set us thinking. Had those two children changed places in their infancy, would their lives have still been the same, or might they have changed places? Of course in such speculations we must make allowance for idiosyncrasies.

Charles Mayne Young was born in Fenchurch Street in 1777. His father, who was a surgeon, appears to have been anything rather than an estimable character. While yet a child, Charles went on a visit to his aunt and uncle, Dr. Müller, the court physician, at Copenhagen. There the King and Queen and Queen Dowager became so fond of the boy that they would have kept him altogether. At parting they gave him a purse, which the Queen had worked for him, filled with gold, a watch, and two portraits which had been taken of him—one of these was hung in the King's private cabinet.

He commenced his education at Eton, but altered circumstances at home, through the dissipated habits of the head of the household, rendered his stay there brief, and he was removed to Merchant Taylors'. By-and-by the father's conduct rose to such a height of infamy that the sons removed their mother from beneath the paternal roof, and Charles took her support upon himself.

His first entrance into life was as a merchant's clerk. It does not appear how he first came to entertain the idea of taking to the stage; the only information to be gleaned upon the subject is that given in the "Memoirs" of Mathews, who relates that he met him as an amateur in some theatricals held in a loft over a stable in Short's Gardens, Drury Lane. Young soon grew tired of the

dull drudgery of office work, and in 1798 we find him making his *début* at Liverpool, under the name of Mr. Green, in *Young Norval*. His success appears to have been immediate and assured. The year after his *début* we find him engaged for the principal business at Manchester. Thence he migrated to Edinburgh, and at once established himself in so high a position, both histrionically and socially, that in 1802 we hear of his being a guest at the table of Walter Scott, with whom he contracted an intimate friendship.

It was in 1804 that he first met the beautiful Julia Grimani, who soon afterward became his wife. There was something of romance attached to this lady's history. The Grimani's were an ancient and illustrious family, who had given five Doges to Venice. Gaspar, Julia's father, had been destined for the church, but not only did he break his own vow of celibacy, but persuaded a nun to do the same. They were married, and coming over to England they took up their abode here. After some years he became professor of mathematics at Eton. But ere this his first wife had died, and he had married a beautiful girl named Mademoiselle Wagner, who became the mother of Julia. This child was a *protégée* of the Countess of Suffolk, under whose roof she resided some time. There she received offers of marriage from more than one nobleman, but declined them all, and on her father's death determined to take to the stage. Her friends, as a matter of course, did all in their power to dissuade her from such a career, but in vain. She appeared toward the close of the Haymarket season in 1804 as *Juliet*, and made so decided a success that the managers of all three theatres were anxious to secure her. She determined, however, to go into the provinces

for a time, and appeared at Liverpool that same year. Charles Young was the leading man, the Romeo, Jaffier, Hamlet of the theatre. Very soon their stage love became a reality, and early in the following year they were married. It was a deep and passionate love upon both sides. But their happiness was doomed to be short-lived. The lady died within fifteen months, after giving birth to her first child, now the Rev. Julian Young, his father's biographer, to whose reminiscences I am largely indebted for this article.

This gentleman relates a romantic and pathetic anecdote touching his mother's death, which is worth transcribing. During the summer months, when their professional duties permitted them, she and her husband were in the habit of taking excursions into the country around Manchester; sometimes they extended their walks so far that they would put up for the night at a village inn and return to town next morning. In one of these rambles they strolled into the pretty village churchyard of Prestwich, and sat down under the sweeping shadow of a beautiful birch-tree. It was a glorious summer's day, and the peaceful calm of the scene produced a deep impression upon the mind of the young wife, then shortly to become a mother. "If anything should happen to me," she said, laying her hand upon her husband's shoulder, "promise that you will lay me beneath this tree." A few weeks afterward both her sad forebodings and request were fulfilled. In such respect were both held that every shop was shut along the whole route by which the funeral passed.

Although he survived her fifty years, he never married again. His heart was buried with his dead wife beneath that tree in the little Lancashire graveyard, and

her memory remained green and beautiful to him through all that time. As he grew old this feeling intensified; he was continually reverting to her beauty, her tenderness to him, her devotion to her parents. At such times he would take her miniature from the recesses of a secret drawer, and, as he gazed upon it until the tears ran down his furrowed cheeks, he would deplore its unworthy presentment of her sweet face, and then he would produce from a cherished morocco case a long tress of chestnut hair. His very hopes of heaven were interwoven with her image, and "Thank God! I shall soon see my Julia," were almost his last words.

Thanks to the warm recommendation of his friend and old fellow-amateur, Mathews, a correspondence was opened between him and George Colman. Young asked £20 a week and a benefit; to which the manager replied that such terms "much exceeded any bargain formed within my memory between a manager of the Haymarket Theatre and a performer coming to try his fortunes upon the London boards." "We propose, then," he says, in the last paragraph of his letter, "£14 a week and a benefit; you to take all the profits of that benefit, however great, after paying the established charges. Should there be a deficiency, we insure that you shall clear £100 by it. This upon mature deliberation is all we think prudence enables us to offer."

Of Charles's *début* on June 22, 1807, Peake, writing of this period in "The Memoirs of the Colman Family," says: "Colman was fortunate this year in the engagement of Mr. Charles Young from Manchester, who proved himself for many succeeding years an actor of sterling merit, a perfect gentleman in his manners, and a most delightful companion in private life. Mr. Young was

indeed an honor to his profession." Boaden, in his "Memoirs of the Kembles," gives the following notice of his first appearance :

"My amiable and accomplished friend Mr. R. Westall, I remember, begged that we might see this *début* together; he had a side box at the Haymarket on that night, and we received very great satisfaction from that able and judicious actor. Confessedly, however, it was the Hamlet of Kemble; discriminated only by the personal perfections, or, if you will, imperfections of the performer. It was not so philosophic, but more solemn; there was more vehemence and less pathos; the volume of voice was great, and of good tone, but the articulation was not nice, and he labored under a lisp whenever the letter *s* occurred. But there was great ardor, vast animation, powerful action, untiring energy, good sense."

He played a round of characters : Don Felix in "The Wonder," Rolla in "Pizarro," Penruddock in "The Wheel of Fortune," Petruchio, "The Stranger," and Sir Edward Mortimer in "The Iron Chest," with considerable success. The following year, 1808, he received an offer to join the Covent Garden company for the ensuing winter at £18 a week and a benefit.

John Kemble was of course the paramount power at Covent Garden; Cooke was also one of the company, yet Young held his ground firmly, played Hamlet three times to Kemble's four, Othello to Cooke's Iago; Reuben Glenroy, Sir Edward Mortimer, Macbeth, Beverley, Lord Townley, etc. He achieved his greatest success, however, in Kemble's celebrated revival of "Julius Cæsar" (1812), of which Mr. Julian Young gives the following vivid description :

"One would have imagined," he says, "that the invariable white toga, common to all the male performers, beautiful as it

is when properly worn and tastefully adjusted, would have rendered it difficult, at first, for any but frequenters of the theatre to distinguish, in the large number of the *dramatis personæ* on the stage, John Kemble from Daniel Terry, or Charles Young from Charles Kemble. Whereas, I feel persuaded that any intelligent observer, though he had never entered the walls of a theatre before, if he had but studied the play in his closet, would have had no difficulty in recognizing in the calm, cold, self-contented, stoical dignity of John Kemble's *walk* the very ideal of Marcus Brutus; or in the pale, wan, austere, 'lean and hungry look' of Young, and in his quiet and nervous *pace*, the irritability and nervous impetuosity of Caius Cassius; or in the handsome, joyous face, and graceful, joyous tread, of Charles Kemble, his pliant body bending forward in courtly adulation of 'Great Caesar,' Mark Antony himself; while Fawcett's sour, sarcastic countenance would not more aptly portray 'quick-mettled' Casca, than his abrupt and hasty stamp upon the ground when Brutus asked him 'What had chanced that Cæsar was so sad?'"

Many people even said that the Cassius was superior to the Brutus. Young always had a great admiration for John Kemble, who was undoubtedly the model upon which he formed his style; and the latter seems to have been partial to his young rival and *confrère*. The last time they played together was in "Julius Cæsar." After the play Kemble entered Young's dressing-room, and presented him with several "properties" he had worn in favorite characters, and begged him to keep them in memory of their having fought together, alluding to the battle of Sardis in the play. "Well," he said, "we have often had high words together on the stage, but never off." On Young saying something that touched him, he caught hold of his hand, wrung it in his and then hurried from the room.

In 1821, his son not being old enough for admission to Oxford, he proposed to give him three years at the University of St. Andrews, and wrote to his old friend Scott upon the subject. Thereupon he received an invitation to visit Abbotsford for a few days, bring the boy with him, and talk over the matter with Lockhart. Mr. Julian Young gives a capital account of this visit in his journal, from which we will make one or two extracts:

"As we turned into the gate and were being driven round toward the stables, my father jogged my elbow, and told me to look to the right. On doing so I perceived, at a table in a window, a figure busily engaged in writing, which was none other than the 'wizard's' self. I saw his hand glibly gliding over the pages of the paper; the hand whose unwearied activity had dispensed pleasure to many thousands," etc.

They are shown into the dining-room where breakfast is prepared.

"It was not long before we heard the eager tread of a stamping heel resounding through the corridor, and in another second the door was thrown open, and in limped Scott himself. Although eight-and-forty years have passed away since that memorial morning, the great man's person is as palpably present to me as it then was in the flesh. His light-blue, waggish eye, sheltered, almost screened, by its overhanging penthouse of straw-colored, bushy eyebrows, his scant, sandy-colored hair, the Shakespearean length of his upper lip, his towering Pisgah of a forehead, which gave elevation and dignity to a physiognomy otherwise deficient in both, his abrupt movements, the mingled humor, urbanity, and benevolence of his smile, all recur to me with startling reality. He was dressed in a green cut-away coat, with brass buttons, drab vest, trousers, and gaiters, with thick shoes on his feet, and a sturdy staff in his hand. He looked like a yeoman of a better class; but his manner bespoke

the ease, self-possession, and courtesy of a highly-bred gentleman. Nothing could exceed the winning cordiality of his welcome. After wringing my father's hand, he laid his own gently on my shoulders, and asked my Christian name. As soon as he heard it he exclaimed with emphasis, 'Why, whom is he called after?' 'It is a fancy name, *in memoriam* of his mother.' 'Well, it is a capital name for a novel, I must say.' This circumstance would be too trivial to mention, were it not that in the very next novel which appeared by the author of 'Waverley,' the hero's name was Julian. I allude, of course, to 'Peveril of the Peak.'

Here is an anecdote of Lady Scott, whose want of appreciation of the genius of her husband quite "startled" the writer:

"My father had been admiring the proportions of the room and the fashion of its ceiling, when, observing his head uplifted, and his eyes directed toward it, she exclaimed, in her droll, Guernsey accent: 'Ah, Mr. Young, you may look up at the bosses on the ceiling as long as you like, but you must not look upon my poor carpet, for I am ashamed of it. I must get Scott to write some more of his nonsense-books and buy me a new one.'"

After passing the day in a very agreeable manner, exploring, shooting, etc., dinner being over, and the gentlemen having partaken of their quantum of wine—

"They withdrew to the armory for coffee, when the ladies joined them. In the centre of a small, dimly-lighted chamber, the walls of which were covered with morions, and claymores, and pistols, and carbines, and cuirasses, and antique shields and halberds, etc., etc., each piece containing a history in itself, sat the generous host himself, in a high-backed chair. He would lead the conversation to the mystic and supernatural, and tell us harrowing tales of glamour and second-sight and necromancy.

ey; and when he thought he had filled the scene enough, and sufficiently chilled our marrows, he would call on Adam Fergusson for one of his Jacobite relics, such as, 'Hey, Johnny Cope, are ye waking yet?' or 'The Laird o' Cockpen,' or 'Wha wad na fecht for Charlie?'—and these he sang with such point and zest, and such an undercurrent of implication, that you felt sure in what direction his own sympathies would have flowed had he been out in the '45. When he had abdicated the chair, my father was called upon to occupy it, and he gave from memory the whole of 'Tam o' Shanter.'"

He relates several anecdotes of Scott's indifference, and even dislike, to music of a higher class. At a dinner at Lockhart's, while two young ladies with fine voices were singing French and Italian duets in a most charming manner, he describes him as sitting absent and abstracted, his chin resting on his crutch stick, and his countenance betokening "a sad civility." Presently Mrs. Lockhart began to play upon her harp "Charlie is my darling." The effect was electrical: his whole countenance lighted up in a moment, "he sprang from his chair, limped across the room, and to the peril of those within his reach, brandishing his crutch, shouted forth with more vigor than melody, "And a' the folk cam running out to greet the chevalier. Oh, Charlie is my darling," etc.

Young remained at Covent Garden until 1822. His salary had been raised to £25 a week, but in that year the great attraction of Edmund Kean at Drury Lane so lowered the receipts of the rival house that a general reduction of salaries was proposed, and Young was informed that from that time the management could not afford to give him more than £20 a week. He refused to submit to the proposal. The Drury Lane managers

hearing of this immediately offered him £50 a night, the same sum they were paying Edmund Kean, to perform three nights a week for nine months. The offer was immediately accepted, and bills were forthwith posted all over London, announcing that Edmund Kean and Charles Young would appear together in "Othello." Places were secured six weeks in advance, and the excitement between the partisans of the two tragedians was enormous; for here were the representatives of the two opposing schools—the classic and romantic, into which the theatrical world was divided—brought face to face, thus affording a fine opportunity for impartial judgment upon their several merits.

"Since Quin and Garrick, or Garrick and Barry," says Dr. Doran,* "no conjunction of great names moved the theatrical world like this. Both men put out all their powers, and the public profited by the magnificent display. Kean and Young acted together—Othello and Iago, Lothaire and Guiscard, Jaffier and Pierre, Alexander and Clytus, Posthumus and Iachimo, eliciting enthusiasm by all, but none so much as by Othello and Iago."

But Kean could never reconcile himself to a rival, and he was particularly irritable against Young. "How much longer am I to play with that Jesuit?" he demanded of the managers. So excessive was his jealousy that even the triumph of a foreign actor was insupportable to him. While at Paris he went to see Talma in *Orestes*. The ovation was tremendous; Kean was of course loud in his praises. "Ah," replied Talma, "if you are so pleased with *Orestes*, you must see me tomorrow night in *Cinna*; that is a far finer performance."

* He is writing also of his appearance with Booth.

When they returned home Mrs. Kean was enthusiastic in her praises of the great French tragedian. The next morning her husband quitted Paris; he could not endure to witness such a second triumph.

In 1823 Young returned to Covent Garden. A twelvemonth before the managers had lost his services for a paltry £5 a week; they were now glad to give him his Drury Lane salary, £50 per night, and from that time he never received a less sum. In 1828 he essayed Cooke's great part, Sir Pertinax McSycophant, with decided success. And in the same year he played Rienzi in Miss Mitford's tragedy of that name. Strange to say, in an age that was so fruitful in dramatic writing, good, bad, and indifferent, while Kean, the Kembles, and even Macready, then only just rising out of obscurity, had authors more than enough to write for them, Young continued only to repeat the old parts or perform such new ones as did not rise in importance above two or three others in the same play.

In 1829 he received an offer from the United States of £12,000 for a ten months' engagement; but having already made up his mind to retire, and being in a position to regard with indifference even so tempting a bait, he declined it. His farewell benefit took place at Covent Garden on May 31, 1832, and Hamlet, the part he had chosen for his *début* at the Haymarket twenty-five years before, he selected to take his final leave of the London public. In honor to him, Mathews appeared as Polonius, Macready as the Ghost. So great was the demand for places that the orchestra was converted into stalls, an almost unprecedented thing in those days of an uninvaded pit. The receipts were £643, and £81 were returned to those who were unable to find even standing room.

The following account of his retirement is copied from the *Examiner*, for June 3, 1832:

“Mr. Young took his farewell of the stage by performing for his benefit the character of Hamlet, on Wednesday last, to a house literally crammed. The noise arising from the uneasiness occasioned by this close packing prevented a considerable portion of the play being heard; but the last performance of this accomplished actor was, notwithstanding, greeted with every manifestation of applause. At the conclusion of the tragedy, Mr. Young delivered his farewell address. He expressed his gratitude for the great and continued kindness shown him by the public for five-and-twenty years. He had shared their applause with a Kemble, a Siddons, a Cooke, and an O’Neil, and still, to the last hour of his theatrical life, found himself cheered and supported by their approbation. It had been asked why he retired from the stage while still in the possession of all his faculties unimpaired. ‘I will give you my motives,’ he said, ‘although I do not know that you will receive them as reasons; but reason and feeling are not always cater-cousins. I feel the excitement and toil of my profession weigh more heavily upon me than formerly; and if my qualifications are unimpaired, so I would have them remain. I know that they were never worthy of the approbation with which you honored them; but such as they are, I am unwilling to continue before my patrons until I can offer them only tarnished metal. Permit me then to hope that, on quitting this place, I am honorably dismissed into the bosom of private life, and that I shall carry with me the kindly wishes of all to whom I now respectfully and gratefully say—Farewell.’”

He survived his retirement twenty-four years, dying in 1856, at the advanced age of seventy-nine. A letter written to his son by a lady who knew him well, thus eloquently and pathetically describes the closing years of his life:

“ His gifts and accomplishments were various. His musical taste, his melodious voice, his wide range of anecdote, his extensive knowledge of life, his humorous power of portraying character, his arch, droll, waggish ways and stories, lent to his companionship a charm which rendered him a desired guest in many of the stateliest houses of our aristocracy, where young men and maidens would gather round him eagerly—the one to discuss the incidents of the ‘run,’ and the comparative merits of dogs and horses (for your father, as you know, rode well and delighted in the chase); the other to beg for hints over their song-books, and to listen to his exquisite recitations—while all, of every age and degree, could thoroughly enjoy the waggery of his spirits, and join in the laughter called forth by his innocent peculiarities. He had a somewhat stately manner, tinged, no doubt, by the old dramatic element, which was so pronounced in him—and so far he was certainly artificial—but this was eagerly distinguished from his true nature, so that it only imparted a kind of grotesque flavor to his quaint, and sometimes grandiloquent, treatment of trifles. As time ran on, and the black hair became silvered, and the Roman features lost something of their classic sternness, and the well-balanced figure began to stoop, a deeper tenderness and seriousness gave new interest to his character. Naturally he had a devout frame of mind; and now he declined reading any of the lighter literature of the day, and confined himself to meditation on the sublimer mysteries of the Christian faith, with the simple heart of a little child. . . . His person was well known at Brighton, where he passed the decline of his days. Friends in plenty clustered round his couch, or gladly sat with him in the gloaming, as he hummed his songs of the olden time; for his piano was a never-failing resource, a beloved companion, up to within a few hours of his death. He had a faithful heart for humble friends, and those who had known him through his upward career were cherished by him to the last, and remembered in his parting bequests. Many were the acts of large and thought-

ful liberality that signalized his life throughout long years, and which became known only when infirmity and failing memory obliged him to lean on others as his almoners. By the side of his sick-bed stood a little mahogany table, with an ever-opening drawer, into which the large, white hand would be thrust as oft as any tale of sorrow or application for help reached his ear. ‘What will ye have?’ was the only question asked, and out came the gold and silver without stint; and ‘Mind ye let me know when ye want more for the poor creatures!’ was sure to be his parting injunction. . . . I have often wished that Gainsborough or Sir Joshua could have drawn him as he sat in his richly-brocaded dressing-gown and black-velvet cap, with the dark eyes gleaming from beneath the great eyebrows; the snowy hair, and grave, serene mouth firmly closed, until some sally of nonsense from one of his grandsons, or some stray joke from an odd nook in his own memory, would light up the old face with the rippling sunshine of mirth, and show how light a heart he carried beneath the burden of fourscore years. . . . To those who did, and who count it a joy forever to have loved and been loved by him, I commend his dear memory. He wore the grand old name of gentleman unsullied to the end, and died in the fullness of his years, beloved, honored, and lamented.”

Many anecdotes are related of his love of fun, and of that practical joking which was one of the favorite amusements of the time. He was always abusing Meadows, who resided at Barnsbury, for living so far from the theatre, and every time they met it was: “Well, Meadows, where do you live now?” One day he was riding toward Regent Street, when he saw the comedian in front of him. Raising his voice (and it was a most powerful organ), he shouted out “Meadows, where do you live?” “At No.— Belgrave Square,” cried out the actor, and quick as lightning disappeared up Jermyn Street, “be-

fore," says Planché, to whose "Recollections" we are indebted for this anecdote, "an emphatic impeachment of his veracity rolled like thunder over the heads of the amazed, but amused, pedestrians from Waterloo Place to Piccadilly." "The last time he called upon me [Planché], he left his card, upon which was inscribed, 'Tis I, my lord, the early village cock!'"

He was received as a guest at the houses of the highest aristocracy. Once, while hunting (his favorite exercise) with the Earl of Derby, he was thrown from his horse and picked up insensible. That night he was to play King John, at Covent Garden. The play had to be changed. But nevertheless there appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* next day an elaborate critique, which pronounced an unqualified condemnation upon the performance. We have heard of similar cases, even in this enlightened era. He was an especial favorite with Lord Essex. They were so much together, and on such intimate terms, that Poole, being asked what Englishmen he had seen in Paris, replied: "Only Lord Young and Mr. Essex."

As an actor he belonged to the classic school of Kemble, but his style was more natural than that of his master.

"I cannot help thinking," says the Vicomte de Soligny, "what a sensation Young would have created had he belonged to the French instead of to the English stage. With a voice almost as rich, powerful, and sonorous as that of Talma; action more free, flowing, and various; a more expressive face, and a better person, he would hardly have been second in favor and attractions to that greatest of living actors."

When he and Kean acted together, the contrast must have been remarkably striking: the chiseled face, fine

figure, and musical voice of Young, against the gypsy-features, diminutive form, and hoarse tones of his rival. But one flash of Edmund's marvelous eyes could thrill the audience more than all the stately, finished elocution of the other. Mr. Fitzgerald has well defined Young's position in his profession, when he says ("Life of the Kembles") he "does not light up an era." His name is not associated in our minds with a new starting-point in theatrical annals, as that of Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, and even Macready. But for all that he must have been an admirable actor, even when placed among so many brilliant stars as adorned the stage in his time.

CHAPTER X.

MRS. DORA JORDAN.

One of the Most Brilliant of Modern *Comédiennes*.—A Touching and Romantic Story.—The Modern Mrs. Bellamy and her Splendid Successes on the London Stage.—Connection with the Duke of Clarence.—The Mystery of her End.

NEVER was a stage career more brilliant, and yet few have ended more sadly, than that of the gifted woman whose story we shall next relate. Moralists have taken it as a text whereupon to build sermons denunciatory of theatrical life, to point out its dangers, vices, and miseries. Bigoted asceticism revels in those gloomy pictures in which the shadows are unnaturally deepened, and the lights are wholly omitted; but gentler moralists might draw from that same source the brightest illustrations of noble self-devotion, undaunted perseverance, a high sense of duty, and divine charity. Even the Magdalens have

been devoted daughters, self-sacrificing, and full of generous pity for all who suffer.

Mrs. Jordan was born in Waterford, in the year 1762. Her mother, Miss Grace Philips, was the daughter of a poor Welsh clergyman, and, together with two sisters, took to the stage. Of the father, Bland, little is known; his family objected to the marriage, and obtained its nullification on the grounds of his being a minor. But he did not desert his wife, at least for a time, for we hear of him occupying the menial office of scene-shifter in the same theatre with her; but he early disappears out of the history, and is heard of no more. Dorothy—so was the child called, although she afterward changed it to Dora—made her first appearance upon the Dublin stage, under the name of Miss Francis, as Phœbe in “As You Like It,” when little more than a child. The slight glimpses we obtain of her early years are sadly suggestive. “From my first starting in life at the age of fourteen, I have always had a large family to support. My mother was a duty. But on brothers and sisters I have lavished more than can be supposed.” Poor child! Provincial salaries were then but miserable stipends, and we can imagine the struggles and privations she must have undergone. The mother was evidently a listless, lymphatic personage with little moral strength, weakly dependent upon her child for support, loving her doubtless in that maudlin maternal fashion which is but a variety of selfishness, and regarding her interests only through the medium of the parental ones: weakly yielding to circumstances, however evil or dishonorable might be their results, with no other resistance than whimpers and sighs over her hard fate, rather than risk the wretched pittance that stood between her and absolute privation. Such are too*

frequently actresses' mothers, mere harridans, who fatten on their children's industry—and disgrace.

At sixteen she had already made a hit in one of her future great parts, *Priscilla Tomboy*, in "The Romp."

A poor lieutenant in a marching regiment fell desperately in love with her, and offered to make her his wife. But the mother, foreseeing the future harvest of her talents, stepped between, and, fearing to have the goose with the golden eggs snatched from her, carried it off to England.

Tate Wilkinson, the manager of the York circuit, was an old friend of Mrs. Bland's, and to Leeds, where the company was then performing, she and her family wended their way. Faint and weary, their appearance denoting the penury of their circumstances, they arrived at the manager's house. The mother expatiated with all the eagerness of their desperate condition upon her daughter's talents. "What is her line—tragedy, comedy, or opera?" he inquired. "ALL!" The reply was startling, and far from reassuring in its apparent exaggeration. Wilkinson describes the scene in his "*Wandering Patentee* :

"Upon my suddenly seeing the family I withdrew for half an hour to reflect on what I should do, fearing a scrape from such a loaded connection, and not the least trait of comic power in the features or manners of the young lady, indeed, quite the reverse—dejected, melancholy, tears in her eyes, and a languor that, without the help of words, pleaded wonderfully for assistance."

He asked her to recite a speech, but she was too tired and worn to comply. Upon which the old manager brought out a bottle of Madeira and began to talk over old times with her mother.

The wine and cheerful conversation soon revived her spirits, and again he made a request for "a taste of her quality." She no longer refused, and gave a speech of Calista's from "The Fair Penitent." The exquisite and plaintive melody of her voice, the distinctiveness of her articulation, the truth and nature that looked through her, affected the old actor deeply, and overcame all his fears concerning her "loaded connection." The engagement was concluded, and her opening part was to be Calista; after which she requested to be allowed to sing "The Greenwood Laddie," a song in which she had made a great hit in Dublin.

Her success exceeded all expectation.

"I was not only charmed," says Tate, "but the public also, and still more at what I feared would spoil the whole—the absurdity of Calista after her death jumping forth and singing a ballad; but on she came, in a frock and a little mob cap, and sang the song with such effect that I was fascinated."

From Leeds she proceeded with the company to York, and there changed her name from Miss Francis to Mrs. Jordan. The "Mrs." was substituted for the Miss at the dying request of an aunt, jealous of the family honor, and who left the young actress her wardrobe, a very valuable bequest in their then circumstances, on that condition. The name was selected by the manager—there had been a council upon the subject. "You have crossed the water, so I'll call you Jordan," he cried. The appropriateness is not exactly clear, but so runs the story.

As a matter of course, all the ladies of the company were desperately jealous of the new-comer who so overleaped them, and displayed their mortification in sneers

and annoyances, until it was remarked by the audience that she constantly came upon the stage with her eyes red with weeping. Upon which the truth came out; this only confirmed the public in her favor, and gave a new defeat to her enemies. Mrs. Bland, however, was not behind her daughter's rivals in malice and petty spite; sitting at the wing, one night, while a certain Mrs. Robinson, a very beautiful woman, was playing Isabella, she threw her apron over her eyes and begged Tate as an act of kindness to tell her when "that fright" had done acting and speaking, for it was so horrid she could not look at her. A few nights afterward Mrs. Robinson remarked to the manager that she wondered he could allow the merit he did to Mrs. Jordan; for her part, she could not discover any beyond a small share of mediocrity, and that when he lost his treasure, as he always called her, and *It* went to London, *It* would soon be turned back upon his hands, and be glad to return if he would accept *It*.

"Mrs. Jordan's last appearance as a lady of my company at York," writes Tate, "was on Friday, September 2, 1785, and her last night with me that year as a Yorkshire comedian was at Wakefield, on Friday, September 9, 1785, in the 'Poor Soldier,' from whence she set off with a doubtful heart for London City, dubious of success; but in a few weeks she made her *début*, and, in a few nights after being seen, was so established in fame and favor, and so increasing on the public mind, that it is needless for me to tell the reader what he and she and everybody knows, how she fascinated, nay, intoxicated I may say, the London audience, and played at will-o'-the-wisp, for as she moved they followed."

"Whatever the rehearsals on the stage of Drury might have shown of the new actress," says Boaden, "the out-of-

door world, I remember, was not much assailed; the puff-preliminary had not been greatly resorted to, and the common inquiries produced the usual answers of discretion: 'I think she is clever; one thing I can tell you, she is like nothing you have been used to. Her laugh is good; but then she is, or seems to be, very nervous. We shall see; but I am sure we want *something*.' At length on Tuesday, the 18th of October, 1785, the curtain drew up to the 'Country Girl' of Mrs. Jordan. This was a very judicious alteration by Garrick from the 'Country Wife' of Wycherley. . . . Perhaps no actress ever excited so much laughter. The low comedian has a hundred resorts by which risibility may be produced; but the actress has nothing beyond the mere words she utters, but what is drawn from her own hilarity and the expression of features, which never submit to exaggeration. How exactly had this child of Nature calculated her efficacy that no intention on her part was ever missed, and from first to last the audience responded uniformly in an astonishment of delight. In the third act they saw more clearly what gave the elasticity to her step: she is made to assume the male attire, and the great painter of the age pronounced her figure the neatest and most perfect in symmetry that he had ever seen."

Mrs. Inchbald says:

"She at once displayed such consummate art, with such bewitching nature, such excellent sense, and such innocent simplicity, that her auditors were boundless in their plaudits, and so warm in her praises when they left the theatre that their friends at home would not give credit to the extent of their eulogiums."

Her first serious part was Viola in "The Twelfth Night," in which she appeared on the 11th of November, 1785. The London actresses were no more generous to her success than had been the provincial. "'Tis well enough," they sneered, "while she can romp with

a jump and a laugh, but what will they say to her in the loving and beloved Viola?" "Why," adds Boaden, "that the mere melody of her utterance brought tears into the eyes, and that passion had never had so modest and enchanting an interpreter." Her acting in this part has been described by Elia in one of his most exquisite passages:

"Those," he says, "who have only seen Mrs. Jordan within the last ten or fifteen years, can have no adequate idea of her performances of such parts as Ophelia, Helena in 'All's Well that Ends Well,' and Viola in this play. Her voice had latterly acquired a coarseness which suited well enough with her Nells and Hoydens; but in those days it sank, with her steady melting eye, into the heart. Her joyous parts (in which her memory now chiefly lives) in her youth were outdone by her plaintive ones. There is no giving an account how she delivered the disguised story of her love for Orsino. It was no set speech that she had foreseen, so as to weave it into an harmonious period, line necessarily following line, to make up the music. Yet I have heard it so spoken, or rather *read*, not without its grace and beauty; but when she had declared her sister's history to be a 'blank,' and that 'she never told her love,' there was a pause, as if the story had ended; and then the image of the 'worm i' the bud' came up as a new suggestion, and the brightened image of 'patience' still followed after that, as by some growing, and not mechanical, process, thought springing up after thought, I would almost say, as they were watered by her tears. So in those fine lines:

'Write loyal cantos of contemned love,
Hollo your name to the reverberate hills.'

There was no preparation in the foregoing image made for that which was to follow. She used no rhetoric in her passion, or it was Nature's own rhetoric, most legitimate then when it seemed altogether without rule or law."

In after-years, when she had passed the meridian of her powers, her old friend Sir Jonah Barrington once inquired :

“How happens it that you still exceed all your profession, even in characters not so adapted to you now as when I first saw you? How do you contrive to be so buoyant, nay, so childish, on the stage, while you lose half your spirits and degenerate into gravity the moment you are off it?’ ‘Old habits,’ replied Mrs. Jordan; ‘had I formerly studied my positions, weighed my words, and measured my sentences, I should have been artificial, and they might have hissed me: so, when I had got the words well by heart, I told Nature I was then at *her* service, to do whatever she thought proper with my feet, legs, hands, arms, and features. To her I left the whole matter; I became, in fact, merely her puppet, and never interfered further myself in the business. I heard the audience laugh at me, and I laughed at myself; they laughed again, so did I, and they gave me credit for matters I knew very little about, and for which Dame Nature, not I, should have received their approbation. The best rule for a performer is to forget, if possible, that any audience is listening. We perform best of all in our closets, and next best to crowded houses; but I scarcely ever saw a good performer who was always eying the audience.’”

The charm of her acting was not to be analyzed. A friend once told her he had detected it. “It is your *swindling* laugh,” he said; “you have caught the hearty enjoyment of unrestrained infancy, delighting in its own buoyancy: and you have preserved this in children of a larger growth, who in the world are checked and blighted by decorum and art, authority and hypocrisy.” That these eulogies upon her acting are not the exaggerations of a few enthusiastic admirers is proved by their universality. There were critics who carped even at the Sid-

dons herself, and placed Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Cibber before her; but all agreed with marvelous unanimity that Mrs. Jordan was inimitable—not even the memory of Kitty Clive could cast a shadow upon her brilliancy.

Even stern Hazlitt is highly laudatory :

“Mrs. Jordan’s excellences were all natural to her. It was not as an actress but as *herself* that she charmed every one. Nature had formed her in the most prodigal humor; and when Nature is in the humor to make a woman all that is delightful, she does it most effectually. Her face, her tones, her manner, were irresistible; her smile had the effect of sunshine, and her laugh did one good to hear it; her voice was eloquence itself, it seemed as if her heart were always at her mouth. She was all gayety, openness, and good-nature; she rioted in her fine animal spirits, and gave more pleasure than any other actress, because she had the greatest spirit of enjoyment herself.”

Macready, in his “Reminiscences,” has also left an enthusiastic record of the impression made upon him by her matchless powers :

“If Mrs. Siddons,” he says, “appeared a personification of the tragic muse, certainly all the attributes of Thalia were most joyously combined in Mrs. Jordan. With a spirit of fun that would have out-laughed Puck himself, there was a discrimination, an identity with her character, an artistic arrangement of the scene, that made all appear spontaneous and accidental, though elaborated with the greatest care. Her voice was one of the most melodious I ever heard, which she could vary by certain bass tones, that would have disturbed the gravity of a hermit; and who that once heard that laugh of hers could ever forget it? The words of Milman would have applied well to her: ‘Oh, the words laughed on her lips!’ Mrs. Nesbitt, the charming actress of a later day, had a fascinating power in the sweetly ringing notes of her hearty mirth. But

Mrs. Jordan's laugh was so rich, so apparently irrepressible, so deliciously self-enjoying, as to be at all times irresistible. The contagious power would have broken down the conventional serenity of Lord Chesterfield himself."

When Mrs. Jordan came to London, tragedy, under Siddons, entirely monopolized the town, and on her off-nights the actors performed to empty benches. But with the arrival of the new goddess all was changed, and the houses were as crowded to witness her performances as those of her tragic rival. In the line she chose for herself, however, she had no rival. High tragedy she left to Siddons; high comedy, for which she had not the polish and elegance of manners, to Miss Farren, the successor of Mrs. Abington; but the romps, the boys, "the breeches' parts," and the youthful and tender heroines of serious plays, she entirely monopolized. In the last-named line, however, she was not always successful. Sheridan was greatly dissatisfied with her rendering of Cora in his "Pizarro," and her Imogen lacked power and dignity. In Rosalind she was greatly admired, but, it appears, did not admire herself.

Ere the end of the first season, her salary, which had begun at four pounds, was tripled, with the addition of two benefits. Following the pernicious custom introduced by Mrs. Siddons, she now departed upon a provincial tour, and one of the first places she visited was Leeds. Not a twelvemonth had passed since she had played there at her guinea and a half a week and taken a benefit to empty benches; her terms were now half the receipts after fifteen pounds had been deducted for expenses, and the houses were crammed to the ceiling. So much for the judgment of a provincial audience, whose only test of merit is the metropolitan stamp. The

great hit of her next season at Drury Lane was Miss Prue, in Congreve's "Love for Love," an inimitable performance, as may be imagined from her style. Sir Harry Wildair came two seasons afterward, and never had anything been seen like it since Peg Woffington played that delightful rake. Little Pickle in "The Spoiled Child," and Nell in "The Devil to Pay," two famous farces in their time, but now almost forgotten, were next added to her list of triumphs.

It was in 1790 that her connection with the Duke of Clarence commenced. She had been living for some time under the protection of Mr. Ford, the son of one of the proprietors of Drury Lane, a city magistrate, and the one who made out the warrant for the arrest of Colonel Despard. It was generally believed at the time that they were legally married, as the lady took his name and had two daughters by him. When the duke made overtures to her, she frankly acquainted her protector, and offered to decline them if he would make her his wife. He refused, but afterward pursued her with a malignancy which was as evil as it was despicable. He appears, according to Boaden, to have been a strange, unamiable man, of whom even the persons he constantly met knew little or nothing. The duke was passionately fond of her, and in defiance of public opinion established her at Bushey, treating her as an honored and beloved wife, and exacting from all who came thither a like respect. And during the twenty years they thus lived together, her conduct was as unexceptionable as though she had indeed been the duchess. But public opinion, together with the malice of the envious, visited their vengeance upon her for this breach of moral decorum in a hundred humiliating ways. Hissed

by the audience, abused and maligned by the public prints, insulted in and out of the theatre, these were some of the penalties she paid for her elevation.

One morning, being a little petulant at rehearsal, Wroughton retorted with: "Why, you are grand, madam, quite the duchess again this morning." "Very likely," she replied, "for you are not the first person this day who has condescended ironically to honor me with this title." Then with all her characteristic humor she told that, having that morning discharged her Irish cook for impertinence and paid the wages due to her, the woman banged a shilling down upon the table, crying: "Arrah, my honey, with this thirteener, won't I sit in the gallery, and won't your royal grace give me a courtesy—and won't I give your royal highness a howl and a hiss into the bargain!"

In 1802 the veteran King, the original Sir Peter Teazle, after being fifty-four years before the public, took his farewell benefit, upon which occasion Mrs. Jordan appeared for the first time as Lady Teazle; for she would never attempt the part until Miss Farren had quitted the stage for a coronet. Her conception differed essentially from her predecessors' in this—according to their rendering the six months of fashionable life had totally divested my lady of her original habits, they did not *act* the fine lady, they seemed to have never occupied any other station than their present. Mrs. Jordan thought the rather coarse pleasantries which her ladyship lavished upon Sir Peter were more in the tone of her *former* than her present condition, and she therefore returned to its frank and abrupt discontent; she quarreled with her old rustic petulance, and showed her natural complexion. Yet she was said to want the re-

covering dignity of Abington when she advanced before the prostrate screen.

It is strange, considering her great genius, that she should have been so little written for ; but there was a positive dearth of dramatists at this time, if we except melodramatists, who were plentiful enough. The only genuine comedy part she created was the Widow Cheerily, in Cherry's "Soldier's Daughter," a play highly successful in its day, but which is fast sinking, even in provincial towns, where the old-world theatre still lingers so reluctant to depart into that oblivion to which so many finer works have been consigned.

But the years have been rolling on swiftly since the faultless form of twenty first bounded upon the London stage, since those beautiful eyes first fascinated every spectator, since that joyous laugh first thrilled every heart ; the fragile figure has become too developed for grace, the girlish charm of the face is gone ; the genius and the wonderful laugh are still left, but the public begin to think she does not exactly *look* Priscilla Tomboy, Little Pickle, or Miss Prue. And yet only twenty-four years have elapsed since that notable first night of "The Country Girl." What are twenty-four years amid the brilliant triumphs of the stage ? Looking back they seem but yesterday. And when at length the sense of failing powers and faded beauty is forced upon the actress, it is like waking her from the delicious dream of a single night—but a dream that can never come again.

The duke had long wished her to retire from professional life, for he had been quicker to perceive the dimming of the star, and naturally so, than she. And she had promised to do so when Mrs. Siddons withdrew.

Her loss in jewels and dresses in the destruction of Drury Lane was very large. Writing to a friend just afterward, she says: "In obedience to the duke's wishes I have withdrawn myself, at least for the present, until there is a royal theatre for me to appear in." She acted one night at the Opera House, whither the company had been transferred, for the benefit of the humbler sufferers by the fire; in another letter she intimated that, as it would possibly be her last appearance, a notification to that effect might be passed round the boxes. Yet almost immediately afterward we find her starting on a starring tour through the provinces. But a terrible and most unexpected blow fell upon her.

While acting at Cheltenham she received a letter from the duke to meet him at Maidenhead, there to bid each other farewell. It was the first intimation of the storm she had received. That night she was to play Nell in "The Devil to Pay." She arrived at the theatre prostrated by a succession of fainting-fits. She struggled through the part, however, until the Jobson arrived at the passage where he has to accuse the conjurer of making her laughing drunk. Instead of a laugh she burst into tears. With great presence of mind the actor altered the text to: "Why, Nell, the conjurer has not only made thee drunk, but *crying* drunk." After the curtain fell, she was put into a chariot in her stage dress to keep her appointment with the duke. The interview was, it need not be remarked, a strictly private one. I have not been able to find any satisfactory explanation of this sudden step. Enemies had been constantly at work, Ford among the number, to poison the duke's mind against her, and various infamous reports, all of which circumstantial evidence proves to be false, were circu-

lated against her. But there had been no quarrel, no warning, although rumors of a separation had been circulated: whether or not inspired by a knowledge of his intentions, of which she was kept in ignorance, it is impossible to say. The connection had from the first exposed the duke to constant attacks and remonstrances from real and pretended moralists; and constant dripping will wear away a stone, much less a lover's constancy; then it was so much more easy to purge one's self of a pleasant sin when the sin had grown fat and middle-aged; again, there were that clinging to the stage, of which he undoubtedly disapproved, and a daughter by a former connection, and her husband, not very reputable personages, as we shall presently see. Doubtless there had been a growing dissatisfaction, and some new rumor or some new annoyance, perhaps trifling in itself, had, as it often will, fanned the smouldering fire into a flame.

The sympathy of the royal family sufficiently proves that no disgraceful act on her part brought about the separation, while the affectionate terms in which she pleads for the man who had cast her off display the generosity of her mind. She continued to play both in London and the provinces until 1814, and during the last year of her professional career is said to have realized £7,000—a statement, however, which, although positively made by so good an authority as Sir Jonah Barrington, I am disposed to doubt.

Her eldest daughter, Frances, had married a Mr. Al-sop, who was a clerk in the Ordnance Office. It was an unhappy affair: he appears to have been a dissolute, extravagant man, who, ultimately overwhelmed with debt, was obliged to quit the country; previous to this,

Mrs. Jordan had given him acceptances in blank upon stamped paper, which she supposed were for small amounts, but which he afterward used for large ones. Before he left England she paid the money for the insurance of his life, and, making her daughter an allowance, sent her into Wales. This lady, whose character was far from immaculate, afterward went upon the stage, and appeared in 1815 as Rosalind. Hazlitt said "she played the part with a certain degree of arch humor, but no more like her mother than we to Hercules."

She and the duke, notwithstanding their separation, continued to be the subject of attack in scurrilous newspapers and public prints of the day, until Mr. Barton, of the Mint, published a defense of his Royal Highness, in which he stated the terms, that he himself had arranged, of the separation. According to this statement she was allowed £1,500 a year for her maintenance, and £600 for carriages and horses for her four daughters by the duke, and these were to remain in her care until a certain age, *provided she did not resume her profession*, in which event they were to be delivered over to his custody, she still being allowed the £1,500 a year for her own use, and £800 for her married daughters. With this statement was published the following letter from Mrs. Jordan, which we subjoin for the sake of the explanations it affords and the admirable light in which it places her :

"SIR: Though I did not see the morning print that contained the paragraph alluded to in your liberal and respectable paper of yesterday, yet I was not long left in ignorance of the abuse it poured out against me. This I would silently have submitted to, but I was by no means aware that the writer of it had taken the opportunity of throwing out insinuations which

he thought might be injurious to a no less honorable than illustrious personage. In the love of truth, and in justice to his Royal Highness, I think it my duty, publicly and unequivocally, to declare that his liberality toward me has been noble and generous in the *highest degree*; but, not having it in his power to extend his bounty beyond the term of his own existence, he has, with his accustomed goodness and consideration, allowed me to endeavor to make that provision for myself which an event, that better feelings than those of *interest* make me hope I shall never live to see, would entirely deprive me of. This, then, sir, is my motive for returning to my profession. I am too happy in having every reason to hope and believe that, under these circumstances, I shall not offend the public at *large* by seeking their support and *protection*; and, while I feel that I possess those, I shall patiently submit to that species of unmanly persecution which a female so particularly situated must always be subject to. Ever ready to acknowledge my deficiencies in every respect, I trust, I may add, that I shall never be found wanting in candor and gratitude—not forgetful of the care that every individual should feel for the good opinion of the public.—I am, sir, etc., your much obliged, humble servant,

DORA JORDAN."

Writing to a friend, Mrs. Jordan says: "When everything is adjusted it will be impossible for me to remain in England. I shall therefore go abroad, appropriating as much as I can spare of the remainder of my income to pay my debts." According to every account these debts amounted to no more than £2,000. But even had they been double that amount, they should have been a mere bagatelle to a woman who had made a fortune by her profession, who was *supposed* to have just been recently repaid, *with interest*, a considerable sum lent to the Duke of Clarence, and to be in receipt of £1,500 a year. Here is mystery with a vengeance.

Her charities were considerable, and all her family were more or less dependent upon her; two sons, the Fitzclarences, were in the army, and probably drew heavily upon her resources. That a large portion of her earnings during the twenty years they had been together had been given over to the duke was an acknowledged fact; but it was averred that on the separation all had been paid back and with interest, and that she herself signed a receipt for the same; and yet within a few years during which she earned thousands more, we find her flying from her creditors for debts amounting to £2,000. The probabilities are that her devotion induced her to sign an *acquittance*, for which she received no equivalent. If so, we have an explanation of the Regent's ambiguous phrase, which she quotes in her letter: "My forbearance is beyond what he could have imagined." The payment even of the allowance is incompatible with the poverty in which her last days were passed.

As the end draws nearer and nearer, the picture grows more and more gloomy. She who was once the very fountain of mirth and laughter can now only lie all day long sighing upon a sofa, waiting in terrible anxiety for letters which never come. Each time the messenger returned from his fruitless journey to the post-office, to answer "None" to the eager, questioning look that waited him, her despair and agony grew greater, to be succeeded by a torpor resembling death. From whom those letters were expected, or what was the nature of the news so ardently desired, none knew. We may guess, however, they should have been from the duke—the fulfillment of his promises—the despair of finding herself so cruelly abandoned. Over the last scene of all there rests a strange mystery, which has never been satisfactorily cleared up.

Toward the latter end of June, 1816, Mrs. Jordan's companion wrote to one of that lady's daughters, informing her that her mother had died after a few days' illness at St.-Cloud. At the same time her death was announced in the morning journals. Three days afterward a second letter was received from the same writer, saying that she had been deceived by Mrs. Jordan's appearance, and that she was still alive but very ill. While the daughter was preparing to go to her, there came a third letter, announcing that Mrs. Jordan was really dead. General Hawker himself then went to Paris to ascertain the fact, and arrived there three days after her interment. When Sir Jonah Barrington went to St.-Cloud to gather the particulars of his poor friend's death, the landlord of the house in which she died gave him a most minute description of the sad event: how upon his returning from the post-office with the old report of "no letters" she had fallen back and almost instantly expired. *Yet he made no mention of the resuscitation.* This total forgetfulness of so remarkable an event, if it ever took place, is, to say the least, remarkable. In consequence of these discrepancies a report got abroad that she was not really dead. Boaden himself was strongly impressed with this belief, from a circumstance which I will relate in his own words:

"The dear lady was not an every-day sort of woman. She was near-sighted, and wore a glass attached to a gold chain about her neck; her manner of using this to assist her sight was extremely peculiar. I was taking a very usual walk before dinner, and I stopped at a bookseller's window on the left side of Piccadilly, to look at some new publication that struck my eye. On a sudden a lady stood by my side who had stopped with a similar impulse; to my conviction it was Mrs. Jordan. As she did not speak, but dropped a long, white veil immedi-

ately over her face, I concluded that she did not wish to be recognized; and, therefore, however I should have wished an explanation of what surprised me, I yielded to her pleasure upon the occasion."

About the same time, and without any knowledge of the above circumstance, her daughter Mrs. Alsop believed she saw her mother in the Strand; so terrible was the shock to her that she fell down in a fit, and could never be convinced to her dying day that she had been deceived.

The duke ever cherished her memory with the most profound respect. "She was one of the best of women!" he exclaimed one day to Mathews the elder, whom he discovered gazing upon the portrait which still adorned the walls of Bushey long after the original had passed away; and he uttered the words in a tone that drew tears from the hearer. There is little doubt that he had good reason for such words. When he became king he elevated her eldest son to the peerage as Earl of Munster, and gave precedence to her remaining sons and daughters.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORY OF "PERDITA."

Mary Robinson's Unfortunate Surroundings.—She becomes an Idol of the London Public.—The Prince of Wales falls in Love with her.—His Cruel Desertion of her.—"Perdita" falls from her High Estate and dies in Misery and Destitution.

In all stage annals, and it is saying a great deal, there is no sadder romance than the one we are about to narrate. The whole story, as told by Mrs. Robinson herself, is so like a novel of the last century, that we can

scarcely believe but that it is the adventures of some persecuted but fictitious heroine we are perusing. There is little doubt, however, but that the record is, in the main, true—that she was far more sinned against than sinning. Even so rigid a moralist as Hannah More could not condemn her. Cynical Horace Walpole, who scarcely ever uttered a word of pity for human frailty, could say, “I make the greatest allowance for inexperience and novel passions;” and straitlaced Sarah Siddons exclaimed, “Poor Perdita! I pity her from my very heart! ”

The opening of the story is as weird and mysterious as anything Mrs. Radcliffe could have invented, and fills the reader at once with dread anticipations.

Imagine an ancient house adjoining a cathedral, almost a part of it, with chambers supported by the mouldering arches of the cloisters, opening on the minster sanctuary; approached by a narrow, winding staircase, dimly lit even at noonday; at the end an iron-spiked door which “led to the long gloomy path of cloistered solitude.” “In this awe-inspiring habitation,” she writes, “during a tempestuous night, on the 27th of November, 1758, I first opened my eyes to this world of duplicity and sorrow. I have often heard my mother say that a more stormy hour she never remembered. The wind whistled round the dark pinnacles of the minster towers, and the rain beat in torrents against the casements of the chamber. Through life the tempest has followed my footsteps, and I have in vain looked for a short interval of repose from the perseverance of sorrow.” She describes herself when a child as being swarthy, with very large eyes, and melancholy features, and that the early propensities of her life were romantic and singular; she

loved to creep into the cathedral aisle, or to sit beneath the great brass-eagle reading-desk, and listen to the pealing of the organ and the chanting of the choir. At a very early age she began to write poems in accordance with such habits. The school to which she was sent was kept by the Misses More, sisters of Hannah More, and there she had for schoolmates Priscilla Hopkins, afterward Mrs. John Kemble, and a daughter of Mrs. Pritchard, the great actress.

Her father, whose name was Darby, was half-Irish, half-American—a combination not so common in those days as these, and a merchant of some wealth and position in the city of Bristol, and his home was replete with every comfort, and in some of the elegancies of life. Mary tells us, with some pride, that the bed she slept in "was of the richest crimson damask." Being an only daughter, she seems to have been petted and spoiled. "My clothes," she says, "were sent for from London; my fancy was indulged to the extent of its caprices; I was flattered and praised into a belief that I was a being of superior order. To sing, to play a lesson on the harpsichord, to recite an elegy, and to make doggerel verses, made the extent of my occupations."

By-and-by a disagreeable change came over the family circumstances. Mr. Darby was a speculative man, and conceived the design of founding a great fishing settlement in Labrador. He laid his plans before the Earl of Chatham and other members of the ministry, received their approval, and started to America to carry it into effect. Within three years the Indians had destroyed the settlement, and its founder's fortune with it. He had desired that his wife should accompany him, but, as we shall see more fully presently, she was a poor, weak-

minded, lymphatic creature, whose fear of a sea-voyage was greater than her love for her husband—and she reaped the consequence—Mr. Darby formed a connection abroad. He returned to England at the end of the three years, but did not remain long. The home of the Darby family was broken up, and they removed to London. Mrs. Darby was compelled to open a small school at Chelsea to eke out a subsistence; but the late merchant, returning unexpectedly, was so indignant at what he styled this degradation of his name, that he compelled her to break it up, although it would seem that he contributed but little to the family support.

During this time Mary had been growing a remarkably beautiful girl of fourteen or fifteen, so precociously developed as to be taken for seventeen or eighteen. In all her parents' vicissitudes due care seems to have been bestowed upon her education, and she was as clever and accomplished in mind as she was charming in person. By-and-by the father disappears again; his parting words to his wife are highly characteristic—"Take care that no dishonor falls upon my daughter; if she is not safe at my return I will annihilate you." These words greatly influenced the girl's future destiny.

Among her other talents was one for dramatic recitation, and her dancing-master was so struck with her abilities that he persuaded her to take to the stage, and procured an introduction to Garrick, who was then about retiring. She passed an evening at his house, and recited to Roscius, who was so pleased that he arranged she should appear as Cordelia to his Lear, no other part being suitable to her extreme youth. She now became a frequent visitor at Adelphi Terrace. "Garrick," she says, "was delighted with everything I did. He would

sometimes dance a minuet with me, sometimes request me to sing the favorite ballads of the day, but the circumstance which most pleased him was my tone of voice, which he frequently told me resembled that of his favorite, Cibber."

Mary, who was as vain and fond of praise as most young beauties are, was delighted at the prospect that opened before her, and looked forward to her *début* as an actress with the most pleasurable anticipations. But the event was doomed to be put off for some time yet. At one of the windows opposite to the house in which she and her mother lodged, a young man was constantly appearing, who declared his admiration for his beautiful neighbor in dumb show, and endeavored by every means to attract her attention; so persevering was he, that Mrs. Darby was at length obliged to keep the blinds down all day. Going to dine one Sunday with a party at the Star and Garter at Greenwich, a gentleman, upon her arrival, stepped forward to hand her out of the carriage, in whom, to her great astonishment, she recognized her importunate neighbor. Having thus obtained an introduction, he a few days afterward paid the ladies a visit; and having discovered in the mother a fondness for books of a moral and religious character, greatly pleased her by presenting her daughter with such exhilarating works as "Hervey's Meditations" and others of a similar character, and conversing in such a strain and upon such subjects as would be likely to flatter her propensities. So charmed was the lady with this good young man that although Mary had not long entered into her sixteenth year, she gave a willing ear to his proposals for an immediate union. Not so Mary, however, who by no means reciprocated his passion.

Mr. Robinson—such was the gentleman's name—was articled to the law, and represented himself as the heir expectant of a rich uncle. From a mother's point of view it was a good match, and it would overthrow the theatrical arrangements, of which Mrs. Darby was very doubtful. The dreadful threat of her bumptious husband was likewise preying upon her mind, and she was probably anxious to shift upon another the responsibility of a precociously developed and very beautiful girl, who attracted a great deal of attention, and was vain and sentimental into the bargain. So Mary was married—rather against her will, for the event destroyed all those delicious illusions of stage triumphs upon which she had set her heart. Her only motive in marrying Mr. Robinson was, she says, to remain near her mother, who, to clinch the matter, he had artfully arranged should live with them. "My heart, even when I knelt at the altar, was as free from any tender impression as it had been at the moment of my birth." During the first week after the honey-moon she told her mother, "with a torrent of tears," that she was the most wretched of mortals. Not a favorable augury for the future life of a bride not sixteen!

Mr. Robinson requested that their union should be kept secret, alleging as a reason that his articles of apprenticeship had not yet expired, and the necessity of breaking the matter gently to his uncle. At length, however, his constant evasions began to excite suspicion, and Mrs. Darby, backed by her friends, insisted that her daughter should be introduced to this august relative, who was in reality the father, Mr. Robinson being an illegitimate son. Accordingly they make the journey into Wales, where he resides, and the young wife is introduced to a family of

which she gives a very unpleasant picture. Her husband's sister, although not more than twenty, is vulgar, stiff, and antiquated in appearance, and receives her with the utmost frigidity. "Mr. Harris looked like a venerable Hawthorn; a brown fustian coat, a scarlet waistcoat edged with narrow gold, a pair of woolen spatterdashes, and a gold-laced hat, formed the dress he usually wore. He always rode a Welsh pony, and was seldom in the house except at meal-time, from sunrise to the close of evening." There is also an old housekeeper, "Mrs. Molly," of overbearing and vindictive spirit.

"It may easily be conjectured," she writes, "that my time passed heavily in this uninteresting circle. I was condemned either to drink ale with the 'squire'—for Mr. Harris was only spoken of by that title—or to visit the Methodistical seminary which Lady Huntingdon had established at Trevecca, another mansion-house on the estate of Mr. Harris. Miss Robinson was of this sect; and though Mr. Harris was not a disciple of the Huntingdonian school, he was a constant church visitor on every Sunday. His zeal was indefatigable, and he would frequently fine the rustics (for he was a justice of the peace, and had been sheriff of the county) when he heard them swear, though every third sentence he uttered was attended by an oath that made his hearers shudder." Mary becomes a favorite with Mr. Harris, but is hated by the two women; her fashionable style of costume is especially distasteful to Miss Robinson, who taunts her with the folly of appearing like a woman of fortune, protesting that a lawyer's wife has no business to dress like a duchess, and that though she may be very accomplished, a good housewife has no occasion for harpsichords and books, things properly belonging only to women who

bring the means to support them. These incidents are worth noting as marking the extraordinary change of manners during the last hundred years.

At the end of three weeks the newly married pair quit this uncongenial roof and return to London. Mr. Robinson, however, delighted with the reception Mr. Harris had given his young wife, fancies his best hopes confirmed, and launches into a high style of living, handsomely furnishes a new house in Hatton Garden, and buys a carriage and saddle-horses. Now begins a life of pleasure and excitement, and Mary, splendidly dressed, is taken to Ranelagh and the Pantheon concert, then the most fashionable assemblages in London, where her beauty attracts the attention of some fashionable *roupes*—Lord Northington, Lord Lyttelton, Captain Ayscough, Fitzgerald—who contrive to get introduced to her. She describes Lord Lyttelton as “the most accomplished libertine that any age or country has produced,” but modifies the statement by adding that his manners were overbearing, insolent, his language licentious, and his person slovenly even to a degree that was disgusting. These gentlemen become constant visitors at Robinson’s house, hoping to find in this young, vain, and inexperienced girl an easy victim. To favor their plans they lead the husband into dissipation and infidelities with the vilest women, of which they take care to inform her. Once Mr. Fitzgerald makes an attempt to carry her off. But through all these temptations she assures us that she remained faithful to her unworthy spouse. In the mean time she is one of the celebrities about town. By day she is seen in the park dressed *à la paysanne*, riding in a high phaeton with her husband and two or three noble admirers, the hat of every fashionable promenader sweeping the ground before her; at

night, at Ranelagh and the Pantheon, patched and powdered and furbelowed like a duchess, she creates a sensation wherever she goes. This splendor, however, is short-lived; ignorant whence her husband draws his resources, she has often questioned him upon the subject, but he has always evaded her inquiries. Before twelve months have passed the crash comes; they have been living upon credit, and on the hope of Mr. Harris's future bounty. Robinson is nothing but an adventurer, who was deeply in debt before his marriage; the creditors press—put an execution into his house, and the fabric of cards topples to the ground, leaving the imprudent pair destitute and homeless.

To such straits were they reduced that she was obliged to go into Wales for her confinement, but met with a very harsh reception, the old man refusing to give them the slightest assistance. "What do you mean to do with your child?" he inquires. "I'll tell you: tie it to your back and work for it." He was indignant, and justly so, at his son's conduct, but he had no right to vent his feelings upon this poor child in years, who was so much to be pitied. Leaving this inhospitable shelter as speedily as possible, she takes refuge for a short time at her grandmother's at Monmouth, but soon returns to London, where her husband is immediately arrested for a debt. Her fashionable suitors, thinking this a favorable opportunity, again commence their attacks, but in spite of his bad conduct, she takes up, with her infant daughter, her abode with her husband in the prison. "During nine months and three weeks never once did I pass the threshold of our dreary habitation, though every effort was made to draw me from my scene of domestic attachment."

Soon afterward Brereton, of Drury Lane, while dining

with them, turned the conversation upon Mrs. Robinson's predilection for the stage, and earnestly recommended it as a scene of great promise to her talents. This revived the old idea; and the husband no longer objecting, but on the contrary highly approving of what might turn out a very good speculation for himself, she obtained an introduction to Sheridan. The great manager, very much struck by her beauty and fascination, as well as by her undoubted abilities, made an appointment in the green-room of Drury Lane. Garrick, Brereton, and himself were present, and she recited the principal scenes of Juliet to Brereton's Romeo, and this character was fixed on for her *début*. The beautiful Mrs. Robinson was already a notoriety in all places of fashionable resort, and the announcement of her appearance upon the stage crowded the theatre with fashionable spectators.

“The green-room and orchestra (where Mr. Garrick sat during the night) were thronged with critics. When I approached the side-wing my head throbbed convulsively; I then began to feel my resolution would fail, and I leaned upon the nurse's arm, almost fainting. Mr. Sheridan and several other friends encouraged me to proceed; and at length with trembling limbs and fearful apprehension I approached the audience. The thundering applause that greeted me nearly overpowered all my faculties; I stood mute and bending with alarm, which did not subside till I had feebly articulated the few sentences of the first short scene, during the whole of which I had never once ventured to look at the audience. The second scene being the masquerade, I had time to collect myself. I never shall forget the sensation which rushed through my bosom when I first

looked toward the pit. I beheld a gradual ascent of heads; all eyes were fixed upon me, and the sensation they conveyed was awfully impressive; but the keen and penetrating eyes of Mr. Garrick, darting their lustre from the centre of the orchestra, were beyond all others the objects most conspicuous. As I acquired courage I found the applause augment, and the night was concluded with peals of clamorous approbation. . . . The second character which I played was Amanda in 'A Trip to Scarborough.' The play was based upon Vanbrugh's 'Relapse,' and the audience, supposing it was a new piece, on finding themselves deceived, expressed a considerable degree of disapprobation. I was terrified beyond imagination when Mrs. Yates, no longer able to bear the hissing of the audience, quitted the scene, and left me alone to encounter the critic-tempest. I stood for some moments as though I had been petrified; Mr. Sheridan from the side-wing desired me not to quit the boards; the late Duke of Cumberland from the side-box bade me to take courage—'It is not you, but the play, they hiss,' said his royal highness. I courtesied; and that courtesy seemed to electrify the whole house, for a thundering peal of encouraging applause followed—the comedy was suffered to go on, and is to this hour a stock play at Drury Lane Theatre."

Statira, in Nat Lee's "Alexander the Great," was her third character. After this she went into the provinces, to Bristol, etc., and paid a visit to her husband's Welsh relations. "Though," she says, "*the assumed sanctity* of Miss Robinson's manners condemned a dramatic life, the labor was deemed *profitable*, and the supposed *im-morality* was consequently *tolerated*. Several parties both at home and abroad were formed for my amuse-

ment. I was consulted as the very oracle of fashion; I was gazed at and examined with the most inquisitive curiosity. Mrs. Robinson the promising young actress was a very different person from Mrs. Robinson who had been overwhelmed with sorrow, and came to ask an asylum beneath the roof of vulgar ostentation."

Upon her return to London she became the rage; her house was always thronged with visitors, her morning *levées* crowded with fashionable people, so that she could scarcely find time for study, while, she says, her fashions in dress were followed with flattering avidity. She was *the* celebrity, and courted and flattered by all the great men, whether by birth or genius, of the day. Her husband drew her salary, squandered it in gambling and upon other women, and neglected her upon whom he was now wholly dependent.

Upon her merits as an actress it would be difficult to pronounce. Her youth, beauty, her sad story, and above all her notoriety, undoubtedly greatly contributed to her success with the upper classes; but had not these been backed by exceptional talents, in those days of great actresses, these would barely have sufficed the general public, who appear to have received her with equal enthusiasm. We now come to that epoch of melancholy celebrity in her life which conferred upon her that strangely appropriate name by which she will be remembered as long as the old scandals of that age survive.

She had performed two seasons in tragedy and comedy, when "The Winter's Tale" was commanded by their Majesties, and she was cast for Perdita. She had never yet appeared before royalty. "By Jove, Mrs. Robinson," said Smith, who was playing Leontes, "you will make a conquest of the prince, for to-night you look

handsomer than ever." The events of that night and of those which arose from it, destined to cast so lasting and melancholy an interest over the name of "Perdita Robinson," we shall give, with a few abbreviations, in her own words:

"I hurried through the first scene, not without much embarrassment, owing to the fixed attention with which the Prince of Wales honored me. Indeed, some flattering remarks which were made by his royal highness met my ear as I stood near his box, and I was overwhelmed with confusion. The prince's particular attention was observed by every one, and I was again rallied at the end of the play. On the last courtesy the royal family condescendingly returned a bow to the performers; but just as the curtain was falling, my eyes met those of the Prince of Wales; and with a look that I shall never forget he gently inclined his head a second time. I felt the compliment, and blushed my gratitude. As I was going to my chair I again met the royal family crossing the stage. I was again honored with a very marked and low bow from the Prince of Wales."

Two or three days afterward, she receives a visit from Lord Malden, who, after much hesitation and apologizing, hands her a note. It is addressed to PERDITA. It contains only a few words, "but those expressive of more than common civility." They are signed FLORIZEL. She does not guess the writer until Lord Malden informs her it is the Prince of Wales. "I was astonished; I confess that I was agitated; but I was also somewhat skeptical as to the truth of his assertion. I returned a formal and doubtful answer; and his lordship shortly afterward took his leave." She read the letter a thousand times, but still was doubtful of the writer, half

suspecting it was an experiment made by Lord Malden upon her vanity. The next evening the viscount repeated his visit, and held forth upon the polished and fascinating manner of his royal highness, his engaging temper, his amiable sentiments. The day after he brings a second letter; assures her the prince is most unhappy lest she should be offended at his conduct; he conjures her to go that night to the oratorio, where he will, by some signal, convince her that he is the writer of the letter, if she is still skeptical upon that point.

“I went to the oratorio; and, on my taking my seat in the balcony box, the prince almost instantaneously observed me. He held the printed bill before his face, and drew his hand across his forehead, still fixing his eyes on me. I was confused, and knew not what to do. My husband was with me, and I was fearful of his observing what passed. Still the prince continued to make signs, such as moving his hand upon the edge of the box as if writing, then speaking to the Duke of York (then Bishop of Osnaburg), who also looked toward me with particular attention.” These signs became so marked as to be observed by the audience, and next day a certain publication observed that there was one passage in Dryden’s Ode which seemed particularly interesting to the Prince of Wales, who

“ Gazed on the fair
Who caused his care,
And sighed, and locked, and sighed again.”

“ However flattering it might have been to female vanity to know that the most admired and most accomplished prince in Europe was devotedly attached to me; however dangerous to the heart such idolatry as his royal

highness, during many months, professed in almost daily letters, which were conveyed to me by Lord Malden, still I declined any interview. I was not insensible to all his powers of attraction; I thought him one of the most amiable of men. There was a beautiful ingenuousness in his language, a warm and enthusiastic adoration expressed in every letter, which interested and charmed me. During the whole spring, till the theatre closed, this correspondence continued; every day giving me some new assurance of inviolable affection." During this time she has never once spoken with him. At length he sends her his miniature. Within the case was a small heart cut in paper; on one side was written, "*Je ne change qu'en mourant;*" on the other, "Unalterable to my Perdita through life." Through the go-between, Lord Malden, she is informed that the prince is almost frantic at her continual refusals to meet him, and with each letter becomes more and more passionately importunate.

"During this period, though Mr. Robinson was a stranger to my epistolary intercourse with the prince, his conduct was entirely neglectful. He was perfectly careless respecting my fame and my repose. His indifference naturally produced an alienation of esteem on my side, and the increasing adoration of the most enchanting of earthly mortals hourly reconciled my mind to the idea of a separation. The unbounded assurances of lasting affection I received from his royal highness in many secretes of the most eloquent letters, the contempt which I experienced from my husband, and the perpetual labor which I underwent for his support, at length began to weary my fortitude. Still I was reluctant to become the theme of public animadversion; and

still I remonstrated with my husband on the unkindness of his conduct."

At length she consents to meet the prince at Kew. She dines with Lord Malden at the inn on the island between Kew and Brentford. A boat is to fetch her across in the twilight; she is landed before the gates of the old palace, and she is met by the prince and the Duke of York, who are walking down the avenue. But scarcely has the prince uttered a few words before they are startled by the sound of voices approaching from the palace. "The moon was now rising, and the idea of being overheard, or of his royal highness being seen out at so unusual an hour, terrified the whole group. After a few more words of the most affectionate nature uttered by the prince, we parted, and Lord Malden and myself returned to the island." Poor Perdita more than ever in love! "The graces of his person, the irresistible sweetness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodious yet manly voice, will be remembered by me till every vision of this changeful scene be forgotten."

"Many and frequent were the interviews which afterward took place at this romantic spot; our walks sometimes continued till past midnight; the Duke of York and Lord Malden were always of the party; our conversation was composed of general topics. The prince had from his infancy been wholly secluded, and naturally took much pleasure in conversing about the busy world, its manners and pursuits, character, and scenery. Nothing could be more delightful or more rational than our midnight perambulations; I always wore a dark-colored habit; the rest of our party generally wrapped themselves in great-coats to disguise them, except the Duke of York, who almost universally alarmed us by the dis-

play of a buff coat, the most conspicuous color he could have selected for an adventure of this nature. The polished and fascinating ingenuousness of his royal highness's manners contributed not a little to enliven our promenades. He sang with exquisite taste; and the tones of his voice breaking upon the silence of the night have often appeared to my entranced senses more than mortal melody . . . The Duke of York was now on the eve of quitting the country for Hanover; the prince was also on the point of receiving his first establishment; and the apprehension that this attachment might injure his royal highness in the opinion of the world rendered the caution, which was invariably observed, of the utmost importance. A considerable time elapsed in these scenes of visionary happiness. The prince's attachment seemed to increase daily, and I considered myself the most blest of human beings."

She had by this time relinquished her profession, her last appearance upon the stage being in the character of Sir Harry Revel in the comedy of "The Miniature Picture," and as "The Irish Widow."

"On entering the green-room, I informed Mr. Moody, who played in the farce, that I should appear no more after that night; and endeavoring to smile while I sang, I repeated—

'Oh joy to you in all in full measure,
So wishes and prays the Widow Brady!'

which were the last lines of my song in "The Irish Widow." This effort to conceal the emotion I felt on quitting a profession I enthusiastically loved was of short duration; I burst into tears on my appearance. My regret at recollecting that I was treading for the last time the

boards where I had so often received the most gratifying testimonies of the public approbation, and that I was flying from a happy certainty, perhaps to pursue the phantom disappointment, nearly overwhelmed my faculties and for some time deprived me of the power of articulation.

“ The daily prints now indulged the malice of my enemies by the most scandalous paragraphs respecting the Prince of Wales and myself. I found it was too late to stop the augmenting torrent of abuse that was poured upon me from all quarters.

“ Whenever I appeared in public, I was overwhelmed by the gazing of the multitude. I was frequently obliged to quit Ranelagh owing to the crowd which staring curiosity had assembled round my box; and even in the streets of the metropolis I scarcely ventured to enter a shop without experiencing the greatest inconvenience. Many hours have I waited until the crowd had dispersed which surrounded my carriage in expectation of my quitting the shop. But, thank Heaven! my heart was not framed in the mould of callous effrontery. I shuddered at the gulf before me, and felt small gratification in the knowledge of having taken a step which many who condemned would have been no less willing to imitate, had they been placed in the same situation.”

The prince omitted no mark of devotion it was possible to bestow, even presenting her with a bond for £20,000 upon his coming of age. “ I was surprised at receiving this,” she writes; “ the idea of interest had never entered my mind. Secure in the possession of his heart, I had in that delightful certainty counted all my future treasures. I had refused many splendid gifts which he had proposed ordering for me at Grey’s and other jewelers.’ The prince presented to me a few trifling orna-

ments not exceeding one hundred guineas. Even these on our separation I returned by the hands of General Lake."

But soon was she to be roughly awakened from this fool's paradise. His royal highness's "establishment" had scarcely been arranged when she received a letter from him briefly telling her "*we must meet no more.*"

"And now suffer me to call God to witness that I was unconscious why this decision had taken place; only two days previous to this letter I had seen the prince at Kew, and his affection appeared to be boundless as it was undiminished." Not two months previously he had sought opportunities of markedly, and as it seemed imprudently, distinguishing her in public. At the birthday ball he had placed her in the chamberlain's box, and publicly sent to her two rosebuds which a lady of rank had just presented to him, and commanded her to wear them in her bosom in the sight of the donor. At all places of public resort, at the king's court, at reviews, at theatres, he paid her the same marked attention.

There was some "secret history" connected with this affair, and it turned out that the sacrifice of the unhappy lady had been found profitable to the two parties which were then at war—the court and the prince. A reconciliation was effected, and the prince was delighted to pay a cheap tribute to public decorum by resigning what he no longer cared to keep, and receiving as his reward that "establishment" and adjustment which had formed such a brilliant vista in the poor lady's dreams.

Though the magnanimous prince was to benefit so handsomely by his sacrifice, his intention apparently was that this disagreeable affair should be closed with the smallest expense conceivable. No answer was given to the lady's letters. She had abandoned her profession,

and had been cast off by her husband. Fortunately she held a bond of her royal admirer's for twenty thousand pounds payable on his "establishment." All such august securities are of little value, save as instruments of negotiation and compromise—it being almost impossible to enforce their payment. Armed with this document, her friends now interfered, and after much discreditable haggling it was felt that some settlement could not be refused with decency. Mr. Fox undertook the office of arbitrator, and decided that the bond should be given up in consideration of an annuity of five hundred a year. Thus prosaically ended the history of Florizel and Perdita.

The rest of her life offered but little interest. The harsh treatment she had met with excited sympathy, and found her some friends of a reputable class. She was privileged to sustain the *rôle* of a heroine "that had suffered"—and, owing to a tone then fashionable in society and encouraged by the press, awakened a fresh interest by becoming a disciple of the sentimental school of which Mr. Merry was chief professor. This taste was chiefly manifested in feeble verses—known as "Poems"—which were thrown off on any occasion that was suitably romantic.

The heroine did not, however, content herself with these *dilettante* exercises, and it is to be feared did not limit herself to the character of "a fair Platonist," as the newspapers of her day might have styled her. She repaired to foreign climes, where her rather frivolous nature was gratified by homage and attentions of a more doubtful kind.*

* Her biographer, approaching this part of her career, has delicately relegated to a note what really ought to have found

During the expedition thus alluded to she entirely lost the use of her limbs, and in spite of every remedy remained almost a cripple for the rest of her life. She was but twenty-four when this affliction befell her. She tried the baths of Aix-la-Chapelle, where, we are assured, "a dawn of comparative tranquillity soothed her spirits." Finding all these attempts useless, she resigned herself to what she was obliged to endure—and during the rest of her life devoted herself to what was called "literary labor," i. e., to the composition of indescribably vapid "Poems" on her own blighted affections, on the death of her father and mother, and which her biographer moderately commends as "not worse than other effusions of the same class." A long course of ill-health at last ended in disease and death, at the age of twenty-six.

an official place in a regular account of her life. And the passage is worth considering, as a specimen of that valet-like style in which it was then customary to dwell on the trespasses of the noble and the fashionable: "An attachment took place between Mrs. Robinson and Colonel Tarleton, shortly after the return of the latter from America. *On the circumstances which occasioned its dissolution, it is neither necessary, nor would it be proper, to dwell.* The exertions of Mrs. Robinson in the service of Colonel Tarleton, when pressed by pecuniary embarrassment, led to that unfortunate journey, the consequences of which proved so fatal to her health. The colonel accompanied her to the Continent; and, by his affectionate attentions, sought to alleviate those sufferings of which he had been the involuntary occasion."

THE END.

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